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The violent collision between Native American and Euro-American politics, spirituality, economy, and community appears most prominently in each culture's attitude toward land, which connects intimately with the position women held in each society. The social construction of land and a woman's "place"—and the interconnectedness between the two as viewed through a Euro-American lens—conflicted so wholly with that of many Native American cultures that what resulted were wars, many fought physically on battlefields, but many others with rhetoric in speeches, books, petitions, and reports. The idea that the two cultures might fight bloody battles over land rights does not need much explanation; however, that they might come to blows as a result of how women acted in each society requires more attention.

Synthesizing the heterogeneous methodologies and insights of American Indian literature, nineteenth-century women's writing, and the history and theory of rhetoric, this dissertation articulates the transrhetorical power of Native American women: their ability to cross cultural and gendered boundaries of rhetoric. I argue that while white middle-class women such as Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Margaret Fuller sought to empower themselves by speaking through Native women's voices, indigenous writers Nancy Ward, Narcissa Owen, Sarah Winnemucca, and Gertrude Bonnin, fluidly negotiating white definitions of gender and culture, used their roles as transrhetors in order to protest land theft and to fight to reclaim territories unjustly taken by the United States government, using rhetoric as a weapon in the war over land.

STORY AS A WEAPON IN COLONIZED AMERICA:  
NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S  
TRANSRHETORICAL FIGHT  
FOR LAND RIGHTS

by

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Approved by

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To my parents, Bob and Barbara Wilkinson, who continue to provide unlimited love and support.

## APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the  
Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## INTRODUCTION:

### WOMEN, LAND, AND RHETORIC

Since the white man as well as the red was born of woman...did not the white man admit women to their councils? ~Reported to have been said by Cherokee Leader Attakullakulla, noting the absence of white women at the South Carolina Treaty Conferences, 1757<sup>1</sup>

The violent collision between Native American<sup>2</sup> and Euro-American politics, spirituality, economy, and community appears most prominently in each culture's attitude toward land, which connects intimately with the position women held in each respective society. The social construction of each—land and a woman's "place"—and the interconnectedness between the two as viewed through a Euro-American lens, conflicted so wholly with that of many Native American cultures that what resulted were wars, many of them fought physically on battlefields, but many fought with rhetoric in speeches, books, petitions, and reports. The idea that the two cultures (and I realize that I am being reductive to lump all Native American nations into one culture, but I will do so for the sake of making this point) might fight bloody battles over land rights does not need much explanation; history details numerous wars over boundaries and territories. However, that they might come to blows as a result of how women acted in each society requires more attention.

Scholars suggest that European and Euro-American men may have felt threatened by the social power of Native American women. If insecurity results in name calling,



then history provides some proof: reacting to the fact that the Cherokee Council of Women had substantial power, including the power to declare war, the British called the Cherokee nation a “petticoat government” (“Cherokee”). Historian Theda Perdue provides this additional enlightenment: “In part because many Cherokee women and men did not conform to the gender norms of the United States, their critics branded them as ‘uncivilized’ and sought their removal west of the Mississippi” (*Cherokee Women* 10). Cherokee men and women, as well as those from the Piute, the Yankton Dakota, and many other Native nations, did not fit within Euro-American expectations of gender norms. The patriarchal settlers viewed the equality enjoyed by many Indian women as a sign of savagery and savagery as a justification for removal from ancestral lands. In her fundamental text on feminism and American Indians, Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux) writes explicitly about the anxiety non-Natives felt because of Native gynocracy, her term for a feminine-centered social system:

The physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes is and was mostly about patriarchal fear of gynocracy. The Puritans particularly, but also the Catholic, Quaker, and other Christian missionaries, like their secular counterparts, could not tolerate peoples who allowed their women to occupy prominent positions and decision-making capacity at every level of society. Wives telling husbands and brothers whether to buy or sell an item, daughters telling fathers whom they could and could not murder, empresses attending parleys with the colonizers and being treated with deference by male leaders did not sit well with the invaders. (3)

However negatively “the invaders” viewed Native Americans’ gender balance, the cultural legacy of that equality armed Native women in what has become an ongoing

rhetorical battle for land over the last several centuries. Because of the political and social parity between genders practiced in many Native nations, Native American women were particularly adept at waging the war for ancestral territories using the written and spoken word.

This project discusses what I am labeling the transrhetorical power of Native American women; that is, their ability to cross both cultural and gendered boundaries of rhetoric. While I concur with Perdue and Allen that, generally, Euro-American society recoiled from the power experienced by Native women, I argue that indigenous women were able to use this power, perceived by those outside of Native American cultures as wild and other, but which was experienced within Native cultures as social and political equality. The way Euro-Americans viewed Native American women, wild and other, allowed them a certain freedom not experienced by white middle-class women, who were required during much of the nineteenth century and beyond to fulfill the societal definitions of what has been called the “True Woman.” Adding to that freedom, the social and political power common to Native American women provided them with a foundation from which to speak. However, in order to be legible to a white audience, indigenous women had to move that audience from their perception of the Indian as wild and other, and in order to do so had to assume the constructs of True Womanhood that they deemed useful to their cause.<sup>3</sup> In this study I argue that four women, Nancy Ward, Narcissa Owen, Sarah Winnemucca, and Gertrude Bonnin (also known as Zitkala-Ša), fluidly moving outside and inside white definitions of gender and culture, used their roles

as transrhetors in order to protest land theft and to fight to reclaim territories unjustly taken by the United States government.

In order to lay the groundwork for this argument, some historical explanation is necessary. To that end, in this introduction I first present the differences between Euro-American views of land and those of Native Americans. Then, I move to a discussion of the Euro-American concept of “separate spheres” for men and women, including how the spheres affected white women’s ability to speak or write publicly about political controversies. From there, I situate this argument in terms of the three disciplines it addresses: Native Studies, nineteenth-century women’s literature, and rhetorical theory. I provide a preview of each chapter that follows, to include a chapter on three non-Native writers and the rhetoric they used to help ameliorate what they saw as the “Indian Problem,” and three chapters on four Native women writers: Nancy Ward, Narcissa Owen, Sarah Winnemucca, and Gertrude Bonnin.<sup>4</sup>

*“He Called Her Once and Thenceforth She Was Always Awake”: A Euro-American Perspective on Women and Land*

In order to differentiate between two social constructions of the definition of land, I turn first to Euro-American views. As early as the fifteenth-century, Europeans who came to what they deemed the “New World,” guided by the Christian edicts set down in Genesis 1:28, practiced a hierarchical relationship to land and the animals that resided on it: “God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” God’s message, according to the writings in

Genesis, is to “subdue” the earth; inherent in this precept is that the earth is both separate from and hierarchically beneath human beings. Wild and other, the earth must be brought under control. “The fish and the fowl” and “every living thing that moveth upon the earth” are likewise apart from and under the control of humans; God’s charge is to “have dominion” over the living creatures. In his foundational work *God Is Red*, Vine Deloria Jr. discusses at length the implications of this Christian doctrine and its diametrical opposition to Indian beliefs about the natural world. He writes of the Indian certainty of a “fundamental relationship between human beings and the rest of nature” and the fact that “the meaning of creation was that all parts of it functioned together” (81). In contrast to Indian beliefs, Deloria notes, “the Christian doctrine of creation that concerns us today is the idea that man receives domination over the rest of creation....It is this attitude that has been adopted wholeheartedly by Western peoples in their economic exploitation of the earth” (82). Exploitation began, as is seen in the writings of earliest explorers, almost from the first footfall onto the sandy shores of the New World, and attitudes that facilitated misuse began in the fifteenth century and continue, arguably, through to the present. Part of the justification for exploitation involved characterizing land as female and, therefore, in a patriarchal society, more acceptably available for objectification.

From the earliest imaginings, conquering land became tied to European ideas of gender hierarchy. Ivy Schweitzer asserts, “By the 1570s, European artists and mapmakers had popularized an allegorical image of America as an indigenous woman” (107). She points to a “most revealing image” drawn by Jan van der Straet and circulated

in an engraving by Theodor Galle<sup>5</sup>. Schweitzer describes it: “Naked and reclining on a hammock surrounded by indigenous flora and fauna, the female figure reaches languidly toward the cloaked and armored explorer” (107). Land, in the eyes of the European explorer, is female, naked, prone, and welcoming. Schweitzer continues, “While Vespucci’s fully rigged ship waits at anchor in the upper left-hand corner, in the center of the background other naked females roast a human leg in the signal ‘American’ act of cannibalism, linking femininity and savagery” (107). The motto at the bottom of the print reads “‘Americen Americus rexit, & Semel vocavit inde semper excitam’ (Americus rediscovers America; he called her once and thenceforth she was always awake)’” (107). From this work of art and Schweitzer’s description of it, one can extrapolate general attitudes Europeans and then Euro-Americans had toward both women and land, attitudes that reverberated for almost 500 years, well into the twentieth-century (still informing our perceptions today).

From a non-Native perception, land, characterized as female, waited for and welcomed being taken. In Galle’s engraving, American land is symbolized by a vulnerable, naked woman, and Europe is a man clothed and protected by armor, carrying an astrolabe and wearing a sword; therefore, Europe holds the advantages of science, weaponry, and “civilization” and is a superior male in relation to a submissive female. From the conflation of land and women, the painting conveys the sense that the European man presides over both. The motto casts America/Woman in the role of passive and “sleeping.” Without Vespucci’s awakening call, America/Woman, and the feminized “savages,” are asleep to the majesty of Europe, symbolized as science (the astrolabe),

technological strength (metal sword), civilization (clothes), and the superiority of man over woman (he stands over her). Interestingly, this image seems to assert that what is important is what Europe can offer to the naked, uncivilized America. In reality, what could be given became the justification for taking. Their presumed cultural supremacy afforded Europeans the means and the rationale to “have dominion” over “their” “New” World.

In Columbus’s “Journal of the first Voyage to America, 1492-1493” are the beginnings of a cultural supremacy on the part of Europeans, to include a description of the new world imagined as a lush, uninhabited expanse, ripe for cultivation, the few inhabitants conveniently “vanished.” Columbus’s narrative provides a feminized place for Europeans to conquer: “I went ashore and found no habitation save a single house, and that without occupant; we had no doubt that the people had fled in terror at our approach.” He continues, “This island even exceeds the others in beauty and fertility” (120). His choice of the female-focused adjectives “beauty” and “fertility” to describe the land lends itself to what will become, in about seventy years, the aforementioned popular image of America as a naked woman, the “blank, ‘savage’ page on which Western desire will be written” (de Certeau qtd. in Schweitzer 107). Annette Kolodny makes the point that “gendering the land as feminine was nothing new in the sixteenth century; Indo-European languages, among others, have long maintained the habit of gendering the physical world and imbuing it with human capacities” (8). However, she also maintains that what happened in America took the feminization of land a step farther. With the “discovery” of America, she states, “the revival of that linguistic habit”

took on a “level of personal experience” and “became the vocabulary of everyday reality” (8-9). Kolodny poses the thought that the “potentially emasculating terror of the unknown” may have prompted settlers “to experience the land as a nurturing, giving maternal breast” in order to quell their fear. Europeans strived to make the land familiar, to quash their anxiety about encroaching upon the strange and mysterious. In Columbus’s excerpt, he does what Andrew Wiget calls “*land-nahme*, the practice of transferring significant place-names from the old homeland to the new” (210). Columbus writes of the New World, “Everything looked as green as in April in Andalusia” (120). Europeans did, of course, give the “discovered” land familiar place names, providing, as Wiget explains it, “the migrating community with a sense of sameness or continuity in historical *space*” (210). The encountered lands were veritably vacant, fertile, and made familiar through naming; they were available for both physical and psychological ownership. If conquering land (and “subduing” any “living thing that moveth” on that land) was God’s will, then profit and piety went hand in comfortable hand.

Almost three hundred years after Columbus and Galle, one can see that the continuing thread of Euro-American man mastering land in response to a charge made by God dovetailed nicely with the goals of early European, capitalist adventurers. Land ownership and cultivation meant improved social and financial status. Indeed, the promise of land ownership drew Europeans to the new continent where they could escape the caste system of the old. America was the place where poor men could become lords of their own small piece of the earth, simply by working it and making it “fruitful.” In 1782, well into the era of new world settlement, Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur wrote of

poor English emigrants to America, “they receive ample rewards for their labours; these accumulated rewards procure them lands; those lands confer on them the title of freemen, and to that title every benefit is affixed which men can possibly require” (147). Here again it is important to take note of gender; Crèvecoeur asserts that land offers *men* all that they require.

Commenting on Crèvecoeur’s *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, Kolodny explains, “Implicitly, the success of the venture [family settlement of land] is tied to Crèvecoeur’s exploration of the image of a landscape totally feminine” (56). For a new American farmer to become literally a “husbandman” and maintain the fraternal relationship with his fellow farmers, the land must be “gratifying both in its maternal and in its virginal aspects” and allow for the immigrant to, in Crèvecoeur’s words, begin “anew in the bosom of this huge wilderness” (as qtd. in Kolodny 56). Certainly from a European perspective land was characterized as feminine. Kolodny, though, shows “when America finally produced a pastoral literature of her own, that literature hailed the essential femininity of the terrain in a way European pastoral never had, explored the historical consequences of its central metaphor in a way European pastoral had never dared, and, from the first, took its metaphors as literal truths” (6). The territory of America—woods, fields, fertile lands—was at once both nurturing mother and wild virgin waiting to be conquered. As feminized inhabitants of that land, the “savages” became intrinsically tied to land passively waiting for white men to conquer.

In order for indigenous peoples to fit neatly into this Euro-American-authored narrative, they had to be classified as simply another of those “living things that moveth



upon the earth”: separate and less than the Christian immigrants who were required by God to dominate them. Though some early writers attempt to depict Indians positively—for example Michel de Montaigne in “Of Cannibals” (1580) in which he describes the indigenous peoples as “*Men fresh sprung from the gods*”<sup>6</sup>—many present them as devils or at the very least godless, decidedly less than human, and certainly less “civilized” than their European counterparts (110). Columbus writes on November 1, 1492,

These people [the indigenous peoples of what is now Cuba] were found to be of the same race and manners with those already observed, without any religion that could be discovered; they had never remarked the Indians whom they kept on board the ships to be engaged in any sort of devotion of their own. (124)

Columbus’s “savages” are not “sprung from the gods” but are godless. “[W]ithout any religion,” indigenous peoples appear uncivilized and obviously un-Christian, closer to animals or devils than men. In 1624, John Smith published his *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles*, contributing to the thought that the Indian (in this case the Pamunkeys of Virginia) and specifically chief Powhatan was “more like a devil then [sic] a man” who had with him “some two hundred or more as blacke as himselfe” (259). This characterization rendered indigenous peoples as things to be subdued rather than independent nations to be respected as equals.

In general, Europeans encroaching upon the land they named America characterized it as feminine: savage, naked, open to ravishment, and ready to be controlled and used by men for individual gain. Kolodny writes, “For all her promise, her bounty, her seductive beauty, nature must finally be *made* to provide for men; he dare

not wait for all to be given” (87). All fertile provisions of America, the flora and fauna, to include the “savage” inhabitants, were therefore at the disposal of European men.

Native American women, however, had something to say about it.

*“The people and the land are inseparable”: Native American Women’s Power, Politics, and Public Discourse on Land*

In order to assume and then wield rhetorical power in the battle for land, female Native American writers wishing to have political influence in a white male public sphere have had to acknowledge, manipulate, and subvert a number of non-Native concepts: 1) land and all of nature (to include Native Americans) by God’s word were separate from the realm of men and must be “subdued”; 2) land, characterized as female, and all the profits produced by it were the “dominion” of Euro-American men; and 3) women, relegated to the domestic sphere, did not have a legitimate voice with which to protest. Fortunately, in reference to the last point, many Native American women, generally, and the four women discussed in this dissertation, specifically, came from Native nations that recognized female rhetorical and political power. For example, Cherokee women coming from a matrilineal, matrilineal society, had their own councils, spoke in men’s councils, made decisions about whether or not the nation would go to war, and helped to decide the fate of captives, at least until the Cherokee Constitution of 1827, but possibly after that date as well.<sup>7</sup> Piute women, Sarah Winnemucca tells us in her 1883 narrative, had equal voice in council meetings, and Piute men shared in what Euro-Americans would deem women’s domestic tasks. The Sioux peoples (Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota) recognized the spiritual power of women, and Yankton Dakota Gertrude Bonnin, in letters to Carlos

Montezuma, offered up feminist values presumably stemming from her traditional upbringing by refusing his desire that she become a demure doctor's wife.

Concerning the first two concepts, land as separate from humans and living creatures as hierarchically below man, Native women had deep-seated cultural beliefs from which to draw in forming their protest rhetoric. As I have maintained, Native peoples, historically, have conceptions of land different from those of Euro-Americans; to extend this idea, indigenous spirituality and community are integral to land in ways that Euro-Americans have had a difficult time imagining. While it is reductive to oversimplify and declare that Native ideas about and uses of land were good and those of non-Natives were bad, there are some basic differences in how each culture viewed land. In general, contrary to Crèvecoeur's declaration that land provided a path to individual wealth and contentment, Native Americans' philosophy about land was only about economic use inasmuch as it provided for the community and *all* of its inhabitants, human and non-human. Politics, spirituality, economy, and community grow from a respect for land as an equal, which leads to a form of land "use" based on Native ethics. This is not to say that Indian peoples live(d) in a utopian state, completely at one with their natural surroundings; certainly, indigenous people worked with the land to insure their own survival, and at times impacted the land in negative ways. However, basic attitudes about land differed greatly from those of non-Native immigrants. Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) writes, "The people and the land are inseparable....In the old days there had been no boundaries between the people and the land....This respect extended to all living things, especially to the plants and the

animals” (85). This long-standing belief provided a base from which Native women could argue. The interconnection between land and people threads through the rhetoric of these women activists and informs their potent verbal attacks on the federal government’s efforts to divest their nations of ancestral territories.

Generally speaking in traditional Native views, land itself garners the highest respect because it *is* the people, suggesting, essentially that it cannot be owned and transformed into profit in the European definition of ownership and capitalism. Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) relates the views of his own nation—“the Sioux people cherished their lands and treated them as if they were people who shared a common history with humans” (1)—and quotes Curley, a chief of the Crow nation, who in 1912 refused to cede more land to the U.S. government, stating, “The soil you see is not ordinary soil—it is the dust of the blood, the flesh, and the bones of our ancestors.... You will have to dig down through the surface before you can find nature’s earth, as the upper portion is Crow” (148). In his statement Curley differentiates between “nature’s earth,” something that cannot belong to any group of humans, and the “dust of the blood, the flesh, and the bones” of the Crow people. He attempts to explain, metaphorically and literally, the Crow concept of land by grammatically and physically layering it on top of the natural land, which no one can claim. Land is not allegorically female and therefore an object available to fulfill the desires of Euro-American men; land is first nature’s and then is Crow ancestors: it does not belong to the Crow; it is the Crow. This concept, that the land and the people are one, is another variable that fed the rhetoric of Native

American women as they fought to defend their ancestral territories against the encroachment of foreign, as Sarah Winnemucca calls them, invaders.

*“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (St. Paul the Apostle, 1 Timothy 2:9-12): White America’s Separate Spheres*

Silence is the command St. Paul the Apostle gives to women: likewise, do not teach and do not have authority over men. Euro-American, Christian women have had to fight this is the long-standing battle in order for their voices to be heard. A manifestation of this silencing of women is the nineteenth-century cultural construction of separate spheres. Separate spheres ideology states that women are relegated to the domestic and private cultural space, physically the home and specifically the kitchen; and that men control the public and political arenas, places of government, religion, and business. For years scholars worked from the assumption that women’s voices were subordinated to men’s and were excluded from male, rhetorical space. Historical evidence suggests that women were consciously and forcibly excluded from speaking and acting in public on issues of national and political importance. Rosemarie Zagarri, in her critical work *Revolutionary Backlash*, writes that for a brief moment “the Revolution profoundly changed the popular understanding of women’s political status and initiated a widespread, ongoing debate over the meaning of women’s rights” (2). Unfortunately, according to Zagarri, “women...would pay a price” for attempting to publicly participate in the politics of the day (134); “The era of democratization for men thus produced a narrowing of political possibilities for women” (Zagarri 2). Post-Revolution, men active

in the politics of the new nation shifted their attention away from the general population, which included non-voters such as women, and began to focus on “those who cast ballots: white male electors” (Zagarri 135). This change instituted a reaction against women in the male realm of politics, and, Zagarri argues, may have brought about the notion of separate spheres; women’s political influence, “became absorbed into the discourse of separate spheres, as articulated in the prescriptive literature of the day” (134). If women were to exert any political power, they had to do so within the domestic space by influencing the husband and children.

Many in the nineteenth century acknowledged the existence of and problems inherent in a separate woman’s sphere. In the introduction to Margaret Fuller’s 1845 essay “Woman in the Nineteenth Century,” Horace Greeley writes,

The problem of Woman's position, or “sphere,”—of her duties, responsibilities, rights and immunities as Woman,—fitly attracts a large and still-increasing measure of attention from the thinkers and agitators of our time. The legislators, so called...are not as yet much occupied with this problem, only fitfully worried and more or less consciously puzzled by it. More commonly they merely echo the mob's shallow retort to the petition of any strong-minded daughter or sister, who demands that she be allowed a voice in disposing of the money wrenched from her hard earnings by inexorable taxation, or in shaping the laws by which she is ruled, judged, and is liable to be sentenced to prison or to death, “It is a woman's business to obey her husband, keep his home tidy, and nourish and train his children.” (5)

As Monika Elbert notes in her introduction to *Separate Spheres No More*, Fuller herself hopes for and predicts a “ravishing harmony of the spheres” (qtd. in Elbert 1). Likewise, at the Seneca Falls’ Women’s Rights Convention in 1848, Maria W. Chapman’s poem

“The Times That Try Men’s Souls” posits an escape from the female sphere; it begins “Confusion has seized us, and all things go wrong / The women have leaped from ‘their spheres’, / And, instead of fixed stars, shoot as comets along, / And are setting the world by the ears!” (416). But the women’s optimistic hopes do not come to fruition as quickly (or at all?) as they may have envisioned or wished. Elbert also cites Louisa May Alcott who, almost thirty years after Fuller and Chapman, laments “Let us hear no more of ‘woman’s sphere’ ....I am tired, year after year, of hearing such twaddle about sturdy oaks and clinging vines and man’s chivalric protection of woman” (qtd. in Elbert 1). That these writers protest against the imprisonment of women in a sphere separate from that of men is evidence that this ideology impacted them. However, contemporary scholars give us the means to look at this social construction in alternative ways.

In her important work *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Karlyn Khors Campbell remarks that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton placed the start of the women’s rights movement at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. When five female delegates from the United States anti-slavery societies attempted to enter the convention, officials refused to seat them (K. Campbell 4). That women were not allowed to be at the conference underscores the lengths to which men went to keep women from entering into the public and political rhetorical space. Despite the locks and chains, some women found their way in, but always through a proverbial back door or by slipping through an unlocked gate while the men were made momentarily unaware. To be more concrete, only under extraordinary circumstances or because of some social status that placed a woman already outside of the normative female sphere, did women gain

rhetorical ground. Regrettably, Zagarri reports, “women who participated in political activities became increasingly subject to virulent attacks,” and “Women who spoke out in public created even bigger problems and attracted even greater abuse” (135-136). Newspaper editorials of the day evince the backlash women received for daring to voice their concerns (Zagarri 135-136). However, it is not clear whether Zagarri is referring here only to white middle-class women who were held to rigid social expectations or to all women, regardless of class, social status, and/or race. Although Ritchie and Ronald assert in the introduction to their anthology *Available Means* that women of color or those who, in a white society, would be assumed to have less power might be at a disadvantage (xxix), I believe that in the case of Native American women, the same social rules do not to apply. However tightly closed the door to men’s rhetorical space for white women, some Indian women found ways in by using their transrhetorical abilities.

Despite evidence from nineteenth-century writings, debate continues over the definition or the very existence of gendered separate spheres. To talk of two distinct, separate spheres, female/private and male/public, may be to oversimplify. Previously recognized boundaries did not take into account the permeability of gendered spheres due to differences in race and class. Defining only two spheres, male and female, limits our ability to unpack the impact wielded by those already outside of those socially defined gender boundaries. Helly and Reverby, in their introduction to *Gendered Domains*, discuss “the varying ways the oppression of women had been encoded or disguised by our employment of the concept of divided spheres” (1). “History,” they suggest, “is



central to understanding” and then offer the possibility that there are “instances when a public/private framework might be imposing a structure on history that obscured rather than revealed the past” (2). Davidson and Hatcher in their introduction to *No More Separate Spheres!* argue “we have run the gamut of what the separate spheres model can tell us about nineteenth-century America and beyond” (11). They acknowledge the ongoing usefulness of continuing to pose questions of gender, but state that “many other factors complicate the binary model of men versus women” (11-12). They assert that if scholars “want to understand operations of gender, we *must* understand other factors contributing to identity and literary creativity” (12). In *Going Public* Scott and Keates present essays that seek to “unsettle received opinion and provoke new discussion” about the division between private and public, by focusing on “different normative systems” (ix). They cite conferences in the late twentieth century in which participants asserted that “‘public’ and ‘private’ had different meanings in different national and cultural contexts” (xi). This distinction, of course, was no less true in the nineteenth century. My project attempts to focus on one such example of difference in cultural context. Allowing for the non-Native concept of a defined woman’s “place” in use during the nineteenth century, one that contrasted with a man’s in terms of rhetorical space, this project aims to look at the complication of culture, specifically three different Native American cultures: Cherokee, Piute, and Yankton Dakota. Using their own cultural construction of what was right for a woman in terms of public and political responsibility and their knowledge of what was acceptable for women within the non-Native culture, women from these Native nations created a transrhetorical space in which to speak.

*“You know that women are always looked upon as nothing; but we are your mothers; you are our sons”: The Transrhetorical Power of Native American Women*

In early contact between cultures, Euro-Americans felt comfortable using strength to take the land they thought of as rightfully theirs, whether they justified the taking with supposed physical and intellectual might or moral and technological superiority. From Galle’s engraving, we see a manifestation of each of these assumed advantages: the protective clothing, the weapons, the accoutrements of science, the ship in the distance, the staff with the cross held high above the Native’s head. That Europe is symbolized as a man also introduces gender-hierarchical thought into the arena of assumed racial hierarchy. In contrast to Europe, Native America is naked, seated, empty-handed, and a woman. Instead of ships in the distance, in the background on her side of the depiction are other naked women roasting a human leg over an open fire. From a European perspective America, the land and the symbolic woman, is savage, intellectually stunted, technologically backward, and immoral. As Ivy Schweitzer argues—following Annette Kolodny’s account of Euro-Americans’ envisioning of land as both nurturing mother and seductive virgin—she is also prone and ready to be taken, an object of sexual as well as commercial desire. Certainly Europeans and later a Euro-American audience might read the picture in that way. However, in a rhetorical situation, by definition much of the message depends on the audience. If we can for a moment place an indigenous woman, perhaps a strong Pamunkey female leader or a Cherokee War Woman, as audience contemporary to this work of art, a different message emerges. From a Native American woman’s perspective, possibly, Native America is not so much reclining as she is rising up. Her hand is raised to convey to Europe to wait or, better, stop. And, with one foot

moving off of the hammock, she is about to put her foot down, figuratively and literally. European Man has not so much an expression of triumph or even curiosity but one of incredulity and perhaps dread. Instead of bowing to the idea of a “New” World as defined and claimed by European men and seeing, Galle’s caption described it, an America rediscovered and awakened, a Native American woman viewing this picture might see resistance, a woman ready to defend her world. A line paraphrased from Wendy Rose’s twentieth century poem “For the White Poets Who Would Be Indian” comes to mind: you imagine your America *and go back*. But, of course, Europe did not go back. And Native women rose to stand their ground.

*American Indian Literature, Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing, and Rhetoric*

In this project I engage with at least three different critical disciplines: American Indian literature, nineteenth-century women’s writing, and the history and theory of rhetoric, particularly in terms of gender. I draw on historical context to inform all three areas of inquiry, and in relevant situations I borrow theory from one practice to inform another. I found it necessary to do so because of the lack of critical analysis that speaks to the convergence of all three. While a number of scholars have written on each of these areas separately and some have paired them in different combinations, no one as yet has brought the three areas together: the defense of Indian land rights by Native American women using Euro-American, gendered rhetoric.

In order to put these three areas in dialogue, I draw on some fundamental texts and come into conversation with some contemporary scholarly works. Paula Gunn

Allen's *The Sacred Hoop* provides the essential starting point for discussions on Native Americans and feminism. Allen writes extensively about a women-centered system, the gynocracy, and how it was viewed by Euro-American, patriarchal society. Additionally, she investigates the "red roots of white feminism": how early feminists such as Eva Emery Dye and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw found "guiding spirit[s] of American womanhood" in Native women, particularly Sacagawea (220).<sup>8</sup> This study, too, looks at how white women writers aligned themselves with Indian women as they searched for models of strength and equality, specifically in the chapter on non-Native women writers. However, my investigation adds to Allen's reversal of the direction, as well; that is, how Native American women studied and put into use the constructs of white womanhood. Illustrating ways in which white writers aligned themselves with created or perceived Native Americans, I follow up with chapters on Native American women writers that inquire how indigenous women used white perceptions to facilitate Native goals. That is, I articulate how, formed by the balance of power inherent in their own cultures and informed on the imbalance within Euro-America, they used rhetoric as a weapon in the white world to engage in the fight for land rights.

A number of scholars' critical texts inform my analysis of the white women writers Lydia Maria Child, Catherine Maria Sedgwick, and Margaret Fuller. In *Removals* Lucy Maddox engages with the texts of Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller, among others, addressing how "American writers...intentionally or not, contribut[ed] to the process of constructing a new-nation ideology, a process that...justified the physical removal and supplanting of the Indians" (11). While her text informs my investigation of these

writers, I expand on her argument by addressing how Native women wrote back. Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence* shows how photographers used sentimentalism in ways that oppressed Native Americans, particularly centering on the "before" and "after" photographs taken of Indian children who entered boarding schools run by white Christians. Using Gertrude Bonnin's semi-autobiographical accounts of her time spent at White's Manual Institute, Wexler makes note of that writing back, suggesting that Bonnin "not only speaks her own story but tells the sorrow of a hundred silent pictures" of children who were forced to give up their connections to their Native nations, languages, and cultures (120). Wexler touches on a reversal of discourse, Native Americans looking back at their white oppressors; however, her text is even more useful to my analysis of white authors. She writes that that the

first cohort of American women photographers...often used the 'innocent eye' attributed to them by white domestic sentiment to construct images of war as peace, images that were, in turn a constitutive element of the social relations of the United States imperialism during the annexation and consolidation of the colonies. (6)

The "innocent eye" of the photographers is akin to that of Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller in their literary depictions of Native peoples, as is their use of the "domestic sentiment," and I make the appropriate parallels. And, though Wexler does use Bonnin's writing as an example of a reversed of gaze, which corresponds with my views, my project differs in that it specifically focuses on how Bonnin's rhetoric crossed cultural and gender boundaries in her concern about issues related to land rights.

While Wexler's *Tender Violence* provides valuable information regarding Bonnin, my investigation of Native writers Narcissa Owen and Sarah Winnemucca also comes into conversation with commentary from contemporary Native American literary scholars. Stephen Brandon and Karen Kilcup offer two of the very few literary studies of Owen's memoirs. In his article about Owen and her son, Senator Robert Owen, Brandon focuses on the rhetoric of self-representation, and he argues for more critical attention of her writing. Kilcup's introduction to Owen's memoirs provides an enormous amount of historical background, and also offers a brief discussion about rhetoric and land loss. I extend their research by looking at the ways Owen uses rhetoric informed by both her white and her Cherokee identities to cross gender and culture barriers in her description of the results of illegal forced removal; that is, the Trail of Tears. Siobhan Senior's work on Sarah Winnemucca, included in *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance*, focuses on rhetoric and representation of self. Senior provides essential information about opportunities for resistance through written and spoken English generated by the era of Indian assimilation, focusing on individual and tribal identity and including a productive discussion of Winnemucca's gender-bending actions and of her use of the sentimental in her appeals to her white audience. I expand on these, once again, by investigating the convergence of rhetoric, gender, and culture as Winnemucca consciously uses these gender and culture crossings to attempt to win back land for her Piute people. Rhetorical analyses on the speeches of Nancy Ward are, to my knowledge, non-existent. Mention is made of her in non-Native-authored history texts, but most often she is pointed out as a novelty—a woman speaking to a gathering of men. I believe

mine is the first investigation of the content of these orations, and certainly it is the first to place her speeches within the context of gendered rhetoric deployed in an attempt to retain land.

Through the eyes of Euro-Americans, Native American women, obviously, were not men, specifically not white men, and so were not automatically welcomed into a male rhetorical space; but, neither were they women in the same way that white women were women. Though they could take on the trappings of a Euro-American culture, in some cases the Victorian norms of True Womanhood, they were always, obviously, self-identified as Indian. I argue that this positioning did not constitute a disadvantage. Their flexibility was ascribed could then be translated into rhetorical fluidity. Native women, in ways that they then could readily exploit rhetorically, became “un-gendered” or least more loosely tethered to the Euro-American societal expectations of “woman.” Indian women used their position as exotics, figures already “othered” as compared with mainstream American women, to enter into and manipulate the masculine “separate sphere” public and political rhetoric. Once inside that ideological sphere, at times constituted by an actual physical space, they could then become legible to their white audience by manipulating and utilizing attributions or markers normatively associated with Euro-American females, such as the tropes of sentimentality and domesticity. However, while Native American women could gain entry by existing outside the prescribed parameters of female-ness and then turn and gain legibility by assuming those same female parameters, they infused their rhetoric with Native notions of power and gender: they became transrhetorical. Working from specific tribal definitions of

“woman” that carried greater gender equality, to include public speaking and political power, Native American women created their own indigenous rhetorical situations within the confines of white, Euro-American ones. In so doing, they contributed significantly in making the masculine public sphere an imaginative and at times actual space accessible to women, but most importantly, they furthered their nations’ fights for land rights.

*White, Native, Male and Female: the Overlapping Spheres of Rhetoric*

The three non-Native women included in this project published their texts almost half a century before three of the four Native women’s works discussed in the later chapters (the exception being the speeches of Nancy Ward). The decision to include these non-Native women writers and to place them first is a conscious one. Situating them before the Native writers fits chronologically because Child’s *Hobomok* appeared in 1824, Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* in 1827, and Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes* in 1843, all long before the first written Native text I consider: Sarah Winnemucca’s *Life Among the Piutes*, published in 1883. However, my choice is more than simply following a timeline. Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller made significant inroads into the male sphere, specifically by weighing in on the very public “Indian Problem.” Rhetorical power could be had for white women if they aligned themselves with a strong, female (or feminized) Native character.<sup>9</sup>

Senier has noted about *Life Among the Piutes*, “it is easy to see why the book would have been appealing to late-nineteenth-century readers, especially white women reformers” (90). Sarah Winnemucca, according to Senier, played to the “audience’s



sense of Indian cultures as more egalitarian,” a decided attraction to the non-Native women readers. But in the early nineteenth century, there were few if any novels written by Native American women. In their absence, white women invented Indian characters or described Indian peoples to fit their purposes. While scholars have long discussed the problems inherent in the invention of identity by those outside of a given culture, my focus is not so much on created identity as it is on non-Native writers’ culturally uninformed notions of land loss. Because Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller come from a society that values land in diametrically opposite ways compared to values held by Native peoples, their representation of removal, specifically their portrayal of the “Vanishing Indian,” as Wexler observed “masked and distorted what otherwise must have been more apparent” (7); that is, the white women writers functioned to make normal that which was abhorrent, a political action that in today’s world we label ethnic cleansing. I place the analysis of these non-Native texts first in order to then show how Native women writers worked, at times, in collusion with and in a more foundational way decidedly against the white considerations of indigenous land loss.

Moving into the chapters on Native women writers, I begin by discussing two Cherokee rhetors, Nancy Ward and Narcissa Owen: women who lived over a hundred years and many hundreds of miles apart, but who are informed by the same Cherokee beliefs about land and about the rights and responsibilities of Cherokee women. Ward lived from c.1738–c.1822; the two main texts of hers that I consider are speeches she made to United States Treaty Commissioners in 1817 and in 1819. Euro-American, white men are her clearly understood audience, but also present during her speeches are

Cherokee men and women. In her rhetoric, she obviously negotiates creating herself in a way that her white audience recognizes and finds legitimate, but also uses her power as a Cherokee Beloved Woman to wield words as weapons in her fight for land rights.

Narcissa Owen's rhetorical situation differs greatly from Ward's. Owen writes her memoir in 1907 for an audience of her mixed-blood Cherokee and Scots-American family and friends, but she also clearly considers the potential for the text to be more widely read by a non-Cherokee, American public, long after she has passed. Using the genre of memoir, Owen contradicts written historical accounts about the Cherokee by some white writers while using other white historians and, more importantly, oral stories from female and Cherokee ancestors, to re-present history from her own part white, part Cherokee perspective. Using a "private" memoir as her key to entry, she legitimates her female Indian voice and privileges oral storytelling within the sphere of white, masculine, written and officially documented history, particularly as it relates to duplicitous land deals by the U.S. government.

In chapters four and five, I move to discussions of a Piute writer and orator, Sarah Winnemucca (who published under her married name, Hopkins) and a Yankton Dakota writer and activist, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (who wrote fiction under her Dakota name, Zitkala-Ša). Both women use their power as Native American leaders to gain entry into masculine rhetorical spaces, but they use their ability to assume the tropes of Euro-American True Womanhood to get their messages heard. Much like Ward, Winnemucca was immersed in her own indigenous culture, but developed her transrhetorical abilities through marriage to a white man. Bonnin, like Owen, was

mixed-blood, but she gained her knowledge of white culture through many years of boarding school, college, and political activism.

Although both write non-fiction, Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes* and Bonnin's report, "Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians," employ the tropes of sentimentalist, domestic fiction to expose the immoral and unlawful land grabs by non-Native peoples. Both vividly describe the results of land loss in terms of human suffering and each woman explicitly implores white men and women to act politically in defense of Native nations: for Winnemucca, as spokesperson for the group of Piute people forcibly removed from their homeland who were longing to return and reconnect with those from whom they had been separated; and for Bonnin, as champion of peoples from the "Five Civilized Tribes" forced onto reservations in Oklahoma who were being tricked, molested, and murdered for their land allotments. I will argue that these Native American women rhetors used their perceived identities (the identities that their white audiences ascribed to them) as Indian and female to negotiate personas to both fit into and challenge their audiences' perceptions, thereby opening up the necessary transrhetorical space to legibly argue for the rights of their peoples for land.

As seen in the engraving "America" by Galle, Europeans conflate land and female Indians. Native Americans, in what might seem similar, traditionally consider themselves one with the land. However, the difference occurs in the way each culture relates to the earth and the beings on it. When the umbrella phrase, "the natural world" was used to describe both the land and the indigenous people on that land, from a Euro-American point of view it continued the notion that land and Indians were separate from

*civilized* humans, ameliorated any anxiety over “subduing” and having “dominion” over actual human beings: Native Americans, within the natural world, were *not* then part of the civilized, European world. When Native Americans make statements asserting that the earth is the people, that rocks are ancestors, they facilitate a respect for the earth that continues a connection and equality between place and people.

Each of the Native women considered in this study consciously wrote or spoke to a white audience, although in differing rhetorical situations, in the hopes of holding onto traditional land, receiving compensation for land lost, regaining lost territory, or mitigating the disastrous results of failed land policies. Each of the women carried with her a tribal conception of land that differed from that of her audience and a notion of self that allowed for the expression of the social, cultural, and political ramifications land loss held (and still holds) for Native nations. Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin cultivated the use of the English language; honed their ability to navigate Euro-American rhetorical situations often, like their non-Native counterparts, employing elements of sentimentalism; invested that rhetoric with their own Native and gendered power; and used rhetoric as a weapon in the war for land.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Historian David H. Corkran makes mention of this difference between Cherokee and European expectations in his book *The Cherokee Frontier: Conflict and Survival, 1740-62*. During the mid-1700s a faction of the Cherokee negotiated with the English over the poor quality and high prices of English goods. The English needed the support and trade of the Cherokee, and they hoped to keep the Cherokee nation from trading and siding with the French. It was during these negotiations that Attakullakulla, also known as the Little Carpenter, “lifted his eyes from business long enough to question the English society about him. Conveying the good wishes of the Cherokee women to the Governor, he observed to his excellency that it was customary for the Cherokee to admit women to their councils...for official business appears not to have been done without them” (110).

<sup>2</sup> Here I am applying what I realize is a certain Pan-Indian notion of North American indigenous cultures. Additionally, I am going to use the terms Native, Native American, Indian, and indigenous peoples interchangeably as different terms are used and are acceptable to different populations.

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that True Womanhood was an ideology available only to a few women, and that a significant number of women pushed back against it. Nevertheless, even after it lost its full force, the vestiges of the ideology remained influential, especially for some women of color, in the late nineteenth- and into the early twentieth-centuries.

<sup>4</sup> Bonnin is also known by the name Zitkala-Ša, a name she used when writing much of her earlier work. However, for the text I am most focused on, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, she used Gertrude Bonnin, and so that is the one I will use to refer to her.

<sup>5</sup> An image of Galle's engraving can be viewed on the *Early Americas Digital Archive* website at <http://www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/banner.php>.

<sup>6</sup> Ivy Schweitzer, writing the introduction to "America in the European Imagination" for the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, notes, "Michel de Montaigne was one of the few European intellectuals to resist the reigning absolutism. Profoundly shaken by reports coming out of the New World and a probable encounter with the Tupinamba Indians brought from Brazil to Rouen, he composed his essay 'Of Cannibals' as a critique of European violence, dogmatism, and unreflecting superiority" (107).

<sup>7</sup> The Cherokee Constitution of 1827 curtailed some of the rights of women. The thought of some of the more influential Cherokee leaders was that by reflecting Euro-American gender values, the Cherokee would appear more "civilized." They hoped that if the U.S. government saw a Cherokee nation that mirrored American society, they would be more likely to allow the Cherokee to stay. This, of course, was not the case.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, certainly, writes much more than simply how indigenous women are seen as "object" when viewed by Euro-American men and women. However, for the purpose of this study, that is the area of her text on which I will focus.

<sup>9</sup> The exception and at the same time the rule, here, is the male character, Hobomok. As I explain in the discussion of Child's novel in chapter two, he becomes a feminized figure, allowing the white heroine Mary to take on masculine traits.

CHAPTER I  
WHITE WOMEN, SEPARATE RHETORICAL SPHERES,  
AND THE AGENCY OF INDIANISM

[I]f I should be so fortunate as to find my relatives, they would despise [my mixed-blood children], if not myself; and treat us as enemies; or, at least with a degree of cold indifference,...I told my brother that it was my choice to stay and spend the remainder of my days with my Indian friends, and live with my [Seneca] family as I had heretofore done. ... [H]e informed me ... I should have a piece of land that I could call my own, where I could live unmolested, and have something at my decease to leave for the benefit of my children. ~Mary Jemison, a white woman adopted by the Seneca in 1758, upon being given the opportunity to return to white society<sup>1</sup>

Captured by Shawnee Indians and a group of Frenchmen when she was a young teenager, Mary Jemison was traded to the Seneca, subsequently married and had children within that tribe, and refused the opportunity to return to white society. While we cannot know completely what motivated her to stay, one possible reason was the status women enjoyed within the Seneca nation. She states in her narration that the tasks of Indian women are “probably not harder than that of white women ... and their cares certainly are not half as numerous, nor as great”; Seneca women, Jemison says, “could work as leisurely as we pleased” (148). The autonomy afforded her by her adopted nation in both work and in land ownership differed greatly from what white women experienced.<sup>2</sup> No wonder, then, that white women writers such as Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Margaret Fuller, who read about or observed this difference in gender dynamics, might have seen something desirable in the freedom enjoyed by Indian women



and no surprise that they would have woven that thread into their own visions of the national narrative.

In the nineteenth century Euro-American society, women did not experience the autonomy that many Native American women did. Those white women who wished to have their voices heard had to first contend with the notion of “separate spheres” and the socially constructed model of the ideal woman, which discouraged her from public expression. A “woman who spoke displayed her ‘masculinity’; that is, she demonstrated that she possessed qualities traditionally ascribed only to males” (K. Campbell 11). As noted in the previous chapter, Rosemarie Zagarri argues that after the Revolutionary War, because only white men voted, the political power previously enjoyed by white women became relegated to the domestic domain. In separate spheres ideology

men and women occupied separate but equal roles in society. ... Men would govern the public realm, which included business, religion, politics, and government. Women would prevail in the domestic sphere, where they would oversee the household, raise the children, and regulate the family’s moral and spiritual life. (Zagarri 134)

Zagarri is quick to point out, as many observers have, that the idea of separate spheres “was a normative ideal rather than a descriptive construct, a discussion of what society should be rather than what it actually was” (135). Despite this definition, she asserts that by the mid-nineteenth century the notion of separate but equal spheres, ones that complemented rather than overlapped, was the “dominant framework for understanding gender roles in the United States” and “was enormously influential in shaping popular

perceptions about the way men and women should behave” (135). The only way nineteenth-century American society encouraged white women to participate in politics was from within the confines of the home by influencing the moral decision-making of their husbands and children. As Karlyn Campbell notes, “[T]he very act of speaking publicly violated the concepts of womanhood” (14).

While it was commonplace for Indian women to have a public voice on the political issues of their tribes, white women needed some sort of loophole in order to enter the public discussion without being labeled transgressive. I argue that they found two ways in, although neither was entirely successful. The notion that responsible American women upheld the morals of society and protected the domestic from the corruptions of the public provided one way for white women rhetors to write and yet remain feminine. White women could voice political opinions in their published writings if they couched them in sentimental rhetoric about domesticity; many scholarly articles have been written on this subversive way women entered the masculine rhetorical sphere. However, white women hit on a second tactic to gain entry: the creation or depiction of Indians in such a way as to make allowance for the socially proscribed, un-womanly behavior of their white women characters. Commenting on Child and Sedgwick, Lucy Maddox suggests

[B]oth women implicitly assert the claim of the female novelist, whose fictional domain is still largely limited to the places that women and children inhabit, to invent Indian characters who can be brought out of the woods—the domain of the male novelists—and into the domestic place. In this regard, both women can be seen as at least tentatively attempting to dislodge the categorical distinctions that

had, by the early nineteenth century, separated gender out from issues or questions that might be termed political. (96)

White women writers quietly aligned their characters with Native American women (or feminized Indian men) in order to fantasize about greater gender freedom and equality,<sup>3</sup> and in so doing writers created a public space in which they could voice their own views on the politics of the Indian problem.

Although a connection to Indians provided non-Native women characters with a certain agency, that agency was momentary at best. To remain legible, women writers had to return their characters to domesticity within the confines of patriarchy, and the radical element that provided them with their short-lived freedom, the Indian, had to vanish. The prevailing national narrative required Natives to disappear, and symbolically when the Indians written in by non-Native writers vanished, the non-Native women's own agency was pushed into the distance, too. White writers, despite their best intentions, did more political harm than good for Native American nations with their use of the sentimental: unconsciously, white women authors normalized U.S. policies of removal and ethnic cleansing. But they also wrote into their works the recognized limits of their own agency. White women could not upset the patriarchy upon which they were inculcated to depend nor could they argue for Americans to return America to its indigenous peoples.

The agency of Euro-American female writers was limited by certain sociological parameters. Though the phrase True Womanhood was an invention of the post-Civil War culture, what it meant to be a lady was not much different in early nineteenth century

America; the definition of a True Woman provides the blueprint for how nineteenth-century women were encouraged to behave. In her often cited, seminal article published in 1966, Barbara Welter explains:

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power. (152)

Within the confines of True Womanhood, Welter asserts that a woman's happiness and *power* came from adhering to those four "cardinal virtues." How, then, to affect change in the politics of the nation and still remain submissive? How to enter the corrupt world of men and still remain pure? How to leave the home and still uphold domesticity? How to go against the edicts of the church by being a public figure, but still remain pious? Working from within the ideological confines of domesticity and pressed to uphold the virtues of a True Woman, authors Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller negotiated ways in which they could circumvent these prescribed gender roles and enter the public and political sphere of men without completely endangering their status as virtuous women. They had to hold onto a degree of legibility in order to maintain a credible ethos, which would then give them the agency needed to do their part to solve "The Indian Problem," one of their major social concerns. Unfortunately, their contributions toward Native peoples, although undoubtedly offered in good faith, supplied further "evidence" to their reading public that Indians were inevitably vanishing, leaving in their wake a vast open land there

for the taking—a naked and vulnerable woman, welcoming the superior civilization of Euro-American men.

Sentimentalist fiction provided one of the keys that non-Native women used to unlock the (kitchen) door, allowing them to escape the ideological confines of domesticity and make their way in the public and political sphere that Euro-American society had heretofore reserved for men. Focused on marriage, home, and family, sentimental fictions often recounted the trials a young and virtuous girl (perhaps an orphan) encountered as she traveled in the cruel and corrupt world. Through the help of God, the noble heroine overcame all and achieved the ultimate domestic bliss, a happy marriage. Although male writers wrote sentimental fiction laced with political intent, reform-minded, politically-active female writers used sentimentalism to transgress without transgressing. As long as the subject matter was “female,” that is to say domestic, a woman writer could subversively use her fiction to weigh in on the pressing political questions of the day. If, on the surface, the novel or travelogue appeared to reinforce the virtues of the True Woman, then a woman’s adherence to piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity, and so her reputation and thus legitimacy, remained intact even as she made herself both public and political.

Obviously, the women I have chosen to investigate were much more than writers of thin, romantic, sentimentalist fiction; as many critics have claimed, their fiction was anything but. Additionally, all of them either went beyond the writing of sentimental novels, or, in the case of Fuller, went straight to writing non-fiction that addressed the problems of the day. Even so, through the use of the sentimental these writers broke

through but also adhered to what was considered a proper woman's appropriate sphere. Similarly, the three aligned their characters with Native Americans but then also detached them by having their Indians vanish. For the purposes of this concise study, I will focus on the domestic fictions *Hobomok* by Child, *Hope Leslie* by Sedgwick, and Fuller's sentimental descriptions of the Mohawks and Chippewa in *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*. In addition to writing in the sentimental genre, Child and Sedgwick create a female or feminized Indian character that helps legitimize the transgressive actions of their white women heroines. Fuller, herself the "heroine" of her travelogue, both aligns and separates herself from the Indian women she depicts, offering them up as a symbol of freedom but also as representative of a less-than-civilized, patriarchal anachronism best left in the past, something not to emulate but to learn from.

These non-Native women make room for their voices in the public-political sphere of men, which then sets up a discussion comparing and contrasting Native women authors' use of the sentimental within that same masculine rhetorical space. In addition, I investigate what non-Native women use their sentimentally disguised, subversively political voices to say. I do not doubt the good intentions of Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller, nor do I doubt that their popular texts made contributions to moving the general public from viewing Native Americans as brutal savages to viewing them as the possibly less destructive stereotype of noble savages. But rhetoric is a powerful and at times dangerous entity. Although all of them are sympathetic toward the situations endured by Native Americans, each of these writers helps to further the idea that the Indians are, in fact, vanishing. Sadly, their writings further the idea that the land on which the vanished

Natives live(d) was, by virtue of their vanishing, available to be taken and “productively” used by white Americans. The by-product of these women’s well-intentioned attempts—a normalizing of cultural genocide through Native American land loss—damaged the very peoples they hoped to help.

*“[T]he tender slip which he protected has since become a mighty tree”:  
Lydia Maria Child’s Vanishing Indian, Hobomok*

In Carolyn Karcher’s introduction to *Hobomok*, she explains that Lydia Maria Child, as a young girl, experienced events that “sowed the seeds of a feminist consciousness” (x). During early womanhood in 1828, Child married an “idealistic reformer,” David Lee Child and the two of them joined forces to fight against the United States’ removal of the Cherokee from Georgia (Karcher xi). After the burgeoning feminism of her childhood and before her Native rights activism with her husband, Child published the historical fiction *Hobomok* in 1824 that shows her “conspicuously flouting patriarchal authority and revising the patriarchal script” (Karcher xi). Child’s forward-thinking, feminist lead, Mary Conant, briefly experiences life outside of the patriarchy while she is aligned with an Indian character, Hobomok. But Mary loses that cross-gendered power when Child writes Hobomok out of the story. Despite the feminist leanings of the novel through much of the plot, Child’s story concludes with the sentimental, happy ending of a motherless heroine, Mary, finding love and marriage and reuniting with her family. However, that domestic bliss is only available for Child’s white characters. In Child’s popular historical fiction, the happy ending for Mary, Mary’s lover Charles Brown, and Mary’s father is dependent upon lost Native land and

home, destruction of Native American family and nation, and, finally, the omission of Indianness altogether through two types of vanishing, one literal and one cultural.

Mary, the novel's heroine, defies her father by marrying an Indian, Hobomok. However, she does not marry him out of love; instead, she is overcome by a moment of madness (which may have been brought about by her own dabbling in a sort of witchcraft) and marries him because she believes her one true love, Charles Brown, to be dead. Here we have Child pushing against the confines of a prescribed female identity: her character Mary acts against the wishes of her father. In marrying a pagan Indian (and, therefore, losing both her piety and purity) and not submitting to the will of her father, Mary relinquishes her status as a respected woman. This alone would not constitute a flouting of conventions if Mary was made to suffer for her offense, and then, through God, become redeemed. However, after initial misgivings, Mary's life with Hobomok evolves into a happy one. Through a series of fortuitous events (for Mary), she eventually finds an even more pure, domestic bliss with her one true love, the white, Episcopalian Charles Brown. Despite her character's transgressions against the constructs of respectable, white womanhood, Child does not include any consequences for Mary's actions, in fact, quite the opposite. Mary's father had initially disapproved of a union with Charles because of his religious affiliation. In comparison to an *Indian*, however, an Episcopalian becomes a much lesser "evil." Mary's initial offense actually facilitates her ultimate happiness. This message of family harmony allows Child to transgress without transgressing; she slips deftly back into the female sphere and thus back into legitimacy. What Mary achieves through her act of defiance is domestic bliss:



she and Hobomok have a happy marriage and produce a child, but then, better yet, she returns to a completely white existence in which even her mixed-blood son loses the “stain” of Indianness. Child achieves an opportunity to critique patriarchy and to make public her views on the Indian problem.

With the character Mary as the tipping point, the novel teeters on the boundaries between the male and female spheres, using the narrative of the family to make a political statement about how to solve the Indian problem. When Mary’s father learns of her marriage to Hobomok, “the unexpected information fell like a deadly blow on the heart of the old man,” and after he “pour[ed] out his sorrows before his Maker” (132), he expresses, “I find I could more readily have covered her sweet face with the clods, than bear this” (133). Mary’s insubordination so grieves her father as to make him wish she were dead rather than married to an Indian. Mary and Hobomok live socially apart from both societies: he being shunned by his for a perceived use of witchcraft to beguile the white woman, and she for marrying an Indian. However, Mary grows to love Hobomok, “that kind, noble-hearted creature” (137), and has a son by him. Sally, her one constant friend, remarks, “I always thought [Hobomok] was the best Indian I ever knew...and within these three years he has altered so much that he seems almost like an Englishman” (137). This last line crosses from the domestic into the political, foreshadowing Child’s support of the Cherokee. The Cherokee nation was one of the most assimilated of the Native nations and was considered one of the “Five Civilized Tribes,” along with the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole. Some members of these Indian nations and their white supporters, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson,<sup>4</sup> believed that if they could

sufficiently assimilate into the civilized world of whites, the U.S. government could not in good conscience forcibly remove them from their own sovereign lands. Child, through her character Sally's statement that an Indian in three years can become "almost like an Englishman," appears to support this same anti-removal, assimilation strategy. The conclusion of her story, however, reveals otherwise and puts her in contrast to Nancy Ward and Narcissa Owen, the two Cherokee writers discussed in chapter three.

In this white-authored novel, the marital bliss between Hobomok and Mary Conant cannot last, no matter how much her Indian husband assumes the form of an Englishman. Near the end of the story, Charles, who was thought to have drowned in a shipwreck, returns and meets Hobomok in the woods before Mary knows that Charles is still alive. When Charles tells his tale, Hobomok thinks to himself, "She was first his....The sacrifice must be made to her" (139). Portraying the angst felt by Hobomok, Child writes, "For a long time, however, it seemed doubtful whether he could collect sufficient fortitude to fulfill his resolution. The remembrance of the smiling wife and the little prattling boy, whom he had that morning left, came too vividly before him" (139). She continues, "He paused on a neighboring hill, looked toward his wigwam till his strained vision could hardly discern the object, with a bursting heart again murmured his farewell and blessing, and forever passed away from New England" (141). Because he loves his white wife, Child's noble Indian Hobomok sacrifices himself; he "forever passe[s] away from New England," losing Mary and their son, losing his connections to his tribe, and losing his land. Mary, in a sense, loses too. On the surface, she experiences

the sentimental happy ending by marrying her one true love, but she loses the autonomy and gender equality made available to her by her union with the Indian Hobomok.

In Child's rendition of the meeting of the two cultures, in order for the sentimental moment to come to fulfillment, that is, for Mary Conant to overcome her hardship, find God, be reunited with her father, and live happily ever after with Charles, the Indian Hobomok must give up what might be called *his* sentimental ideal. Child's version of the "noble savage" comes packaged in feminized domesticity. Within the confines of Child's story, Hobomok's family and his home are taken from him, even though Child writes that Hobomok himself gives them up over Charles' mild protestations. Whether Child intends it or not, Hobomok, in a classic sentimental style, represents the mother-figure, and his separation from his family and child constitute a moment of what Marianne Noble might deem a "masochistic pleasure" for the white reading public of Child's book.<sup>5</sup> Hobomok assumes a wife/mother-figure role as he creates a home and provides abundant love for his family, and, through his patient love, Mary eventually becomes an active participant in *his* domestic bliss. Within the marriage, away from the site of patriarchy, Mary plays the masculine role to Hobomok's feminized one.

Rather than the classic sentimentalist plot of a steadfast, god-fearing young woman influencing a wayward man to choose the happiness of family and home, Child's Indian-turned-almost-Englishman Hobomok prevails upon Mary to give up her self-absorbed melancholy and participate fully in their marriage. In response to her depression upon marrying him, Hobomok "continued the same tender reverence, he had

always evinced....So much love could not but awaken gratitude; and Mary by degrees gave way to its influence” (135). He shows the same profusion of love to their child, little Hobomok, “pressing him in his arms until he half suffocated him with caresses” (137). Making the male figure of Hobomok into the mother-protector of their domestic private, keeping out the harsh reality of the town’s public censure, Child creates a gender reversal for Mary to enjoy. “[M]other,” writes Noble, “often functions in sentimental literature as a figure of plenitude,” adding, “the lost state of unity that is central to the sentimental imagination is so frequently the mother-child bond” (66). Superficially, Child satisfies the readers of her novel by giving them Mary’s reunion with Charles and providing the romantic-tragic separation of mother-figure Hobomok from his child. But Child acknowledges this gendered freedom as fantasy when she acquiesces to patriarchal constraints, writing Mary into a more conventional marriage<sup>6</sup> with Charles and writing Hobomok out of the picture all together.

While Mary loses autonomy, Hobomok loses everything. Child desired that her novel humanize “the Indian,” and she creates moments that are decidedly radical for her time, such as the happy, albeit temporary, union between an Indian man and a white woman and the birth of a happy, healthy, loved, and eventually successful mixed-blood son. However, despite Child’s good intentions, she cannot escape hierarchical perceptions of race. Hobomok is considered “good” based on how much like an Englishman he becomes in three short years. This works to affirm whiteness rather than to respect and defend Native American identities and world views, and, despite his near-whiteness, Hobomok cannot remain in Mary’s white world. For the white characters to

achieve the ultimate sentimentalist ending, family unity, marriage, and the “happily ever after,” the Native American characters must lose their fairytale ending. Hobomok loses his connection to his nation, his family with Mary and his son, and his land: “with a bursting heart,” Child’s Hobomok “forever passed away from New England” (141).<sup>7</sup> For the whites to thrive the Indian must vanish. Still, there is the lingering Indian in the mixed-blood child Little Hobomok. However, instead of celebrating the Indianness or mixed-blood status of Mary and Hobomok’s progeny, Child erases his Native traits. She ends her story by informing readers that Little Hobomok became a distinguished graduate at Cambridge; “his father was seldom spoken of” and “his Indian appellation was silently omitted” (150). Little Hobomok vanishes, too, into whiteness. Child provides, with the father, Hobomok, a physical vanishing, seemingly promoting the very thing she will come to fight against: removal. In the character of Little Hobomok, Child eerily predicts what will become government policy via the boarding school system in the late 1800s: vanishing through the stripping away of name, family, and tribal culture. The “tender slip” of Euro-American settlement being protected by Child’s ideal Indian, Hobomok, does indeed “become a mighty tree”: one that conveniently forces him off of the very land he allowed it to take root upon.

A primary assertion of Native American women writers is that loss of land equals destruction of family and community; certainly, however, they do not present this in the tragic, fateful, and masochistically pleasurable way that results in a white happy ending. Unlike non-Native writers for whom the sentimental separation is a literary by-product on the way toward the goal of humanizing and sympathizing with the “other,” the Native

American rhetorical purpose of describing loss of land that results in the snapping of familial and tribal connections is an end to itself—a “who is the savage?” question directed at their white audience. The domestic ideal that the U.S. government sought to impose on Native peoples later in the nineteenth century through forced boarding school attendance and individual land allotment was the very thing that was destroyed via the continual theft of land. Sentimental literature’s adherence to the notion of the “Vanishing Indian” helped to create a national consciousness that literally prepared the ground for cultural genocide through land theft.

*“Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle”:  
Sedgwick’s Vanishing Agency*

*Hope Leslie*, the 1827 novel by Catherine Maria Sedgwick, uses a strategy similar to that of Child. She employs historical fiction (Sedgwick’s novel focuses on the aftermath of the Pequot war in the late 1600s) centered on the domestic and sentimental—a love story—to convey a political message about the Indian problem of her own time, the early nineteenth century. Also, like Child, Sedgwick aligns her white, female heroine with an Indian character, in this instance the Pequot woman, Magawisca. Magawisca’s ability to move fluidly from one gender construct to another within both Euro-American and Native societies makes rhetorical room for the heroine Hope Leslie’s own, less transgressive, gender fluidity in white society. As in *Hobomok*, in the end the white female lead must acquiesce to patriarchy. Granted, just as Mary Conant is allowed a slightly rebellious marriage to the Episcopalian Charles Brown, Hope Leslie gets to marry Everell Fletcher, a man who joins her in challenging the confining rules of the

Puritan patriarchy. Still, while the men mildly resist the system, neither goes so far as to overturn the patriarchy. As in Child's novel, Sedgwick's white female lead achieves the domestic bliss of marriage and loses the agency gained through her connection to a Native American character. Because the white male patriarchy cannot be completely upended, like Hobomok, Magawisca and the Pequot nation must quietly fade into the distant west, leaving the land free for the taking.

In *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America*, Dana Luciano includes an extensive discussion of *Hope Leslie*, focusing on the character Magawisca's "melancholy speech as at once figuring the suspension of the obscured past within the present and endowing that suspension with a revolutionizing *liveness* that might enable it to rearticulate the range of contemporary social possibilities" (102-103). Luciano discusses Sedgwick's use of Magawisca in terms of how the manipulation of voice makes possible social reform by her nineteenth-century audience, suggesting that through the "redeployment of melancholy," Sedgwick's historical fiction

works to restore the sense of *critical* contemplation of the past that is erased by the pathological manifestation of melancholia as a blind spot, since her rearticulation of a melancholy fate as a melancholy state policy can be understood to reflect forward on her own time as well. (114-115)

That is, Sedgwick removes her audience's "blind spot" through re-presenting the past, teaching them to rethink the history of Indian removal or potential extinction in terms of state policy rather than fate; in so doing, according to Luciano, Sedgwick's goal is to create the situation in which her audience can rethink the present (late 1820s)

circumstances of Native peoples in terms of a state policy able to be altered rather than an irrefutable destiny. While I agree with some of what Luciano poses, I am more critical of *Hope Leslie*. I find evidence in the text that Sedgwick, consciously or not, proposes that removal and potential tribal extinction resulted, yes, from state policy, but also from Native American choice, innate Indian savagery, and from a sense of white racial superiority evinced through both white and Pequot characters.

Lucy Maddox's *Removals*, in part, supports my idea of alignment between white female and Native American characters. Maddox provides an important analysis of the "analogies [Child and Sedgwick] draw between the Indians' struggle with Puritan patriarchy and the struggle of white women with nineteenth-century American patriarchy" (92) and writes that *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie* address both "the Indian question" and "the woman question" (92). Because the two authors are writing about a time hundreds of years before their own, Maddox asserts that Child and Sedgwick can use their discussion of the Indian problem to present "the changed status of women," and they can use their narratives to press nineteenth-century women toward acquiring absolute equality with men (96). However, whereas Maddox views the alignment as one in which Indians are "trapped in a kind of perpetual childhood, and so must be left behind while the young white women continue to grow in independence" (97-98), I see the status of white women as only slightly, if at all, changed. And, rather than focusing on their depiction as childlike, I focus on the representation of Indians as vanishing, in such a way that it smoothes over the guilt and immorality of white usurpation of land.



The title character, Hope Leslie, unlike her male counterpart Everell Fletcher, does not grow up directly influenced by the Pequot woman, Magawisca. However, the two women are continually aligned within the trajectory of the narrative: Sedgwick announces the existence of both of them at the same time; readers come to know Magawisca first and then are apprised of the character of Hope; the Indian Nelema functions as an instructive elder for both and then becomes a bridge connecting the two women; each uses Catholicism to engineer her own rescue of sorts, Hope in escaping Mononotto and Onesco, and Magawisca in escaping and reversing the rhetorical trap set by Sir Phillip at her trial; and both covet the love of Everell, as evidenced by the exchange of a locket bearing his image when Hope and Magawisca finally part forever. Sedgwick's attempt, like Child's, is to humanize Indian peoples of the seventeenth century in order to procure for them more just treatment in the nineteenth. Like Child, she proffers a mixed-race marriage (Hope's younger sister Faith marries Magawisca's brother Oneco) and in Magawisca a strong, sympathetic Indian character, meant to be admired. Additionally in Sedgwick's depiction, to a certain extent the Native American family mirrors the sentimental ideal: although she does not marry, the wayward, motherless Magawisca is reunited with her father and the family is made whole. That Magawisca is made familiar by her sentimental characterization benefits Sedgwick another way as well. The Indian woman, because she is already other, can simultaneously be a sentimental feminine ideal and be allowed to act in transgressively masculine ways.

That the character of Hope Leslie is given leave to transgress the boundaries of her gender is brought about by the portrayal of Magawisca's gender fluidity. Sedgwick is not suggesting that Hope learns this from her Native American counterpart; in fact, she more so suggests that Hope's rebelliousness against the confines of gender lies within her and is brought about by the "new country" in which she is raised (98). The author does, however, create rhetorical space for tolerated gender transgression by a white female character by offering the more acceptable gender fluidity of a Native American female: more accepted because of her already other status. Nevertheless, whereas Magawisca can eventually obtain "an ascendancy over her father's mind by her extraordinary gifts and superior knowledge" and be chosen as a leader above her lovesick brother (326), Hope must follow the domestic route and marry Everell to fulfill the sentimental desires of Sedgwick's audience. Magawisca serves her purpose of making ready the path for Hope to experience a slight, temporary permeability of the gendered spheres, but then she must be written out of existence so as not to upset the patriarchy that Sedgwick is unable to completely overturn.

Sedgwick introduces Hope Leslie and Magawisca into her narrative at the same time: the arrival of Hope and her sister Faith at the Fletcher household is the motivation for Mr. Fletcher to secure Magawisca and her brother Oneco as servants. Readers, however, have the opportunity to learn much about the Indian girl before the new, English settler, Hope, arrives. Initially conforming to the characterization of the sentimental female, Magawisca lets slip a single tear<sup>8</sup> and shows "quivering lips" when some members of the Fletcher household talk insensitively about the Pequots. However,

rather than model only Euro-American feminine gender norms, Sedgwick's Indian girl also enacts masculine responses to the conflicts she encounters. When confronted with a scalp she believes to be her father's, she does not burst into tears but "knit her brow as if agitated with an important deliberation"; she then commands the hostile Indian holding the trophy to take a message to her father designed to incite him to action: "Tell him his children are servants in the house of his enemies" (26). Magawisca continues to slide in and out of male and female gender domains, at times softening her angry father with the words of her dead mother and moments later defying him by plotting the escape of Everell. She becomes a regular action hero when she openly refuses to obey Mononotto, drugs the guards set to watch her, and sacrifices her arm rather than allow Everell to be beheaded. Her actions are acceptable to nineteenth-century, white readers for two reasons: she serves the greater good of the story by saving the white, male hero, and, being Indian and other, she is not under the same gender constrictions of white women. Hope Leslie, on the other hand, should be constrained by seventeenth- (and also nineteenth-) century, the more constraining Euro-American definitions of womanhood, but because Sedgwick's readers have been prepared by her characterization of Magawisca, they are more ready to accept the gender transgressions of a white woman, as long as she, too, is serving a greater good.

After her foray into the white world of the Puritans, Magawisca temporarily disappears into the forest, but her presences creates a lingering effect that Sedgwick can put to use. Having introduced the gender-bending Magawisca, Sedgwick is free to develop a more masculine Hope: one looked upon by her more proper friends and family

as “very unladylike” and occasionally even “little better than a heathen” (98). Through her letters to Everell, who is away in England, readers learn that many times, Hope echoes Magawisca’s masculine-like behaviors, ones interestingly connected to indigenous people and places. After insisting on accompanying a group of men on a difficult excursion up a mountain, Hope sees an altar surrounded by evidence of Indian sacrifices. She steps out of the female domain to discuss religion, going so far as to, if a bit obliquely, defend the Indians’ form of worship. In response to one of the party “consecrat[ing] [the site] to the Lord,” Hope teases him and is rebuked for her “levity” when speaking on religious matters (101). During the return trip, when Hope’s tutor, Cradock, is bitten by a rattlesnake, Hope tries to play a heroic, masculine role; using knowledge gleaned from a book on the Crusades, she insists that she can suck out the venom, saving him without endangering herself. Her family and friends, of course, do not allow it, but this does not completely thwart Hope. She next seeks out Nelema, the Indian elder, who uses Native American healing practices to save Cradock. In so doing, Nelema is branded a witch and made to stand trial, which once again requires Hope to act in “unladylike” ways. The reader finds out in the subsequent chapter that Hope, thinking only of the best for all, defies the patriarchal court and helps Nelema to escape.

Peppering these scenes of masculinity are statements from Hope and others testifying to her gender transgressions: “I must have my own way” (102); “thou art somewhat forward, maiden” (109); “Nothing could be more unlike the authentic ‘thoroughly educated’ and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie” (121). What makes this behavior acceptable to Sedgwick’s nineteenth-

century audience? By delineating Magawisca's character first, the author has tempered her audience's rejection of Hope's gender-crossing behavior. Additionally, Sedgwick uses Hope's words to ascribes her character's more assertive nature to the land itself and so, by connection, to the people on it: "I urged," Hope writes to Everell, "that our new country developes [sic] faculties that young ladies, in England, were unconscious of possessing" (98). Her "faculties" do not abnormally change upon coming to America; the normal inclinations are simply manifested. Plus, in all that she does, Sedgwick tells her readers, Hope proves herself "superior to the prejudice of the age" (123); like Magawisca, her gender transgression promotes a greater good.

Nevertheless, in both the seventeenth century and the nineteenth, patriarchy reigns. Hope's gender fluidity cannot last and so Magawisca and the Pequot peoples cannot remain on their own land; there is no narrative need for them anymore. Sedgwick is not yet ready to overturn the patriarchy of which she is a part, just as she is not ready to hand back American land to the Indians. Sedgwick does lay partial blame for Indian removal and possible extinction on the machinations of public officials, but she also portrays the Pequots as choosing to leave, insinuates that because of their innate savagery they cannot remain, and evinces through the voices of both Euro-American and Pequot characters that whites are racially superior and so are the more deserving of land ownership.

Luciano proposes that Sedgwick does not deploy the trope of the "Vanishing Indian" as organic and fated but instead places blame on state policy. To a certain extent, I can agree with Luciano; in *Hope Leslie* the maneuverings of the state do lend

themselves to motivate the Pequots to remove. For instance, after Magawisca's trial and subsequent escape, Governor Winthrop, as Luciano points out, decides not to have her brought back to justice. He reasons that "the probable effect of the condemnation of the Pequod girl" would be to "provoke universal sentiment against the English" and "induce [the Indians] to...combine against the common enemy" (Sedgwick 341). Sedgwick writes that seventeenth century town officials "promote[d] rather than allay[ed]...feuds among the tribes" and thereby assured "the safety of the English settlements" (341). Because the state policy is to encourage Native Americans to kill each other rather than the settlers, the state rather than fate clears the land of the indigenous inhabitants, making it available for further English settlement. Blaming patriarchal authority may have been Sedgwick's intent; unfortunately that is not the only culpability conveyed.

Near the end of the novel, fortuitously for white settlers, Mononotto, Magawisca's father, helps facilitate removal by "choosing" to leave. After Magawisca and her brother escape (he with his wife, Faith Leslie) Sedgwick recounts,

The return of his children, and, above all, of Magawisca, seemed to work miracles on their old father: his health and strength were renewed, and, for a while, he forgot, in the powerful influence of her presence, his wrongs and sorrows. He would not hazard the safety of his protector, and that of his own family, by lingering a single day in the vicinity of his enemies. (339)

Two elements are at work in this passage: female agency and, not coincidentally, Indian removal. Magawisca is prized "above all" and wields "powerful influence" over her father's emotions. While these attributes could still be considered feminine, that he calls

her “his protector” shows Magawisca to be within the domain of masculinity. In the span of a few phrases, she enacts femininity by influencing emotions and masculinity by protecting her father. This model of gender fluidity, however, cannot last in Puritan (or nineteenth-century) America. Sedgwick reminds readers of Mononotto’s “wrongs,” so he cannot be viewed as tragically blameless. Then, having set up him and his family as at least partially deserving of removal, and although “his enemies” force him, Sedgwick fashions removal as Mononotto’s choice: he chooses to leave his land that has become “the vicinity of his enemies.”

Whereas Child’s Hobomok becomes almost an Englishman, Sedgwick’s Magawisca retains her savage status and through her own words validates Indian removal. When Magawisca is jailed for plotting against the settlers and is brought to trial, in contrast to Hobomok, she retains her Native identity. Rejecting the offer of English clothes, in court she wears, “the peculiar costume of her people....Her collar—bracelet—girdle—embroidered moccasins, and purple mantle with its rich border of bead-work” (282). Instead of proclaiming her connection to the white settlers, Magawisca allows no doubt of the difference between the races: she testifies, “Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle” (292). Then, made more damaging in that it comes out of the mouth of a Pequot woman, Sedgwick has Magawisca tell the court (and the readers), “The white man cometh—the Indian vanisheth. Can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us? Nay” (292). In this passage, Sedgwick suggests that the Pequot people are unable to befriend the hostile white settlers. Read one way, she places blame on “the [white] hand raised to strike”;

however, ultimately it is the Pequots who cannot “grasp in friendship the [white] hand.”<sup>9</sup>

Through her appearance and her rhetoric, Magawisca remains savage and other, proclaims her hostility, and states as fact that Indians will vanish and whites will take over the land.

Upon breaking her out of prison, Hope and Everell share a sentimentally poignant moment with their friend Magawisca, who reasserts removal telling them, “we must part—and forever” (330). Hope gushes, “[W]e will walk in the same path,” offering to share both joys and sorrows, but for Sedgwick’s Magawisca, “the persuasions of those she loved [were], not, for a moment, overcoming her deep invincible sense of the wrongs her injured race had sustained” (330). Perhaps this could be read as an indictment against white “wrongs” inflicted upon an “injured race.” However, Magawisca says, “we cannot take as a gift that which is our own” (330). Grammatically, this suggests that white settlers were willing to “gift” the Pequots’ land back to them, thus making the Pequots responsible for not accepting the offer. As savages, they refuse overtures of peace. In even more damning fashion, Magawisca goes on: “the law of vengeance is written on our hearts—you say you have a written rule of forgiveness—it may be better—if ye would be guided by it—it is not for us—the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night” (330). Despite the one nod toward white culpability, “if ye would be guided by it,” Magawisca’s statement places ultimate fault with the Pequots: Indians are vengeful and unable to forgive, and therefore they cannot “mingle” with whites.



Sedgwick's marriage between Faith Leslie and Oneco has the potential to provide an approved "mingling" of the two races. Magawisca accepts the mixed-race couple and eventually convinces Hope to bless the union as well. However, in an interesting racially-reversed mirror of Child's Little Hobomok who becomes entirely white, Faith becomes wholly Indian and then oddly is characterized as almost an idiot. Just as Little Hobomok loses all of his Indian attributes, including his name, Faith loses all of her white ways, including her ability to speak English. When, Hope sees her again many years after Faith had been taken captive by the Indians, Faith tells her sister "No speak Yengees" (228). In a strangely racist depiction, Sedgwick describes "the contrast between the two faces [Hope's and Faith's] thus brought together": Hope "looked like an angel" while Faith (who, if in "contrast" is then the devil?) was "pale and spiritless...only redeemed from absolute vacancy by an expression of gentleness and modesty" (229). Adding to her characterization of Faith as imbecilic, Sedgwick writes that the girl is distracted by a shiny ring which she sits "gazing [at] with child-like delight" (230). When Faith is recovered by her white family, Sedgwick describes her as "keep[ing] on her Indian mantle in that blankety fashion," refusing her "old play-things" and even refusing her sister's "endearing tenderness," (265-266) while she listlessly pines away for her Indian husband. Ultimately, just as Little Hobomok renounces his Indianness entirely, Faith becomes completely Indian by choosing her Pequot family and vanishes with them; she symbolizes a complete transformation rather than a mixing of cultures.

In the course of the book, Sedgwick pits a lying, sexually deviant Sir Phillip against the honest, virtuous, and authoritative Magawisca, leading her readers to admire

and sympathize with the transrhetorical, female, Native character over the white male. Nevertheless, these singular characters do not upset the innate sense of white racial superiority that permeates the text. Key passages in the narrative spoken by Magawisca at her trial preserve the notion of the “Vanishing Indian” as an unavoidable consequence of white progress and as resultant of a “natural” white advantage. Following Luciano’s interpretation that the state bears responsibility for Indian removal, the Governor agrees with Sir Phillip when he states at Magawisca’s trial, “it hath long been my opinion, that we should never have peace in the land till their [the Pequots’] last root was torn from the soil” (288). Magawisca denies the court’s authority to judge her, suggesting a separate but equal relationship between cultures, but she undermines her rhetorical strength by combining that sentiment with two statements affirming that her people have already vanished: they are “gone to the isles of the sweet south-west; to those shores that the bark of an enemy can never touch” (287) and felled “by the tempest that lays the forest low, or...cut down alone, by the stroke of the axe” (292). Forces of nature (“the bark of an enemy” and “the tempest”) and the actions of men (“the stroke of the axe”) combine to drive Indians off of their land. Sedgwick writes,

Before the dawn of the next morning, this little remnant of the Pequod race, a name at which, but a few years before, all within the bounds of the New-England colonies—all, English and Indians, ‘grew pale,’ began their pilgrimage to the far western forests. That which remains untold of their story, is lost in the deep, voiceless obscurity of those unknown regions. (339)

Relegating Native Americans to “deep, voiceless obscurity” restricts Native peoples from writing their own history and gives white writers leave to do it for them. This corresponds with the “silently omitted” “Indian appellation” from Child’s *Little Hobomok*: Indian culture as authored by Indians is erased. With their superior intellect reflected in their ability to write, white novelists and historians ultimately enjoy the right to create the American narrative, to include, or not, the American Indian.<sup>10</sup> The same sentiment will be reflected in Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*.

Child and Sedgwick wrote in the early 1800s and, despite some limitations I have illuminated particularly regarding Native American historical voice, they made strides in altering the way in which Americans perceived Indians. Whatever their mistakes from a revisionist perspective, they entered into the perceived male realm of politics by couching their beliefs in sentimental historical fiction. However, two authors discussed in this dissertation provide the very thing taken away by the two white women authors: Native American political and historical voice. Both the Cherokee memoirist Narcissa Owen and Yankton Dakota writer and activist Gertrude Bonnin occupy the space of a white, middle-class, male sphere by publishing their own politically-charged, indigenous female accounts of history. In instances that will be discussed at length in chapters three and five respectively, Owen and Bonnin provide an “other” history and refute the singularly white one. Owen re-presents the 1730 visit by Cherokee men Caulunna, Ootacite, and Oconostota to England, relating oral histories which refute white written versions of the trip. She corrects what she deems errors in an account of a treaty signing by Oconostota, reinterprets a battle with the Osages, and provides excruciatingly emotional details to the

well-known story of forced removal of the Cherokee in 1836-1838, thereby mitigating the masochistic pleasure of sentimentality by endowing it with a dose of realism. Bonnin voices moments of Yankton Dakota land loss, provides a scathing first-hand account of the destructive nature of Indian boarding schools, and gives voice to abused individuals of the “Five Civilized Tribes” who were at the mercy of corrupt Oklahoma government and judicial system. While it is important to note that these Native women were writing in the early 1900s, enjoying the benefit of a society more receptive toward a woman’s voice as compared to their nineteenth-century counterparts, it is also imperative to recognize the ways in which they worked transrhetorically, asserting their Native voices into a decidedly non-Native sphere.

*“I have not wished to write sentimentally about the Indians”: Margaret Fuller and the Savage Sphere*

In Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, she weighs in on “the Indian problem,” observing, commenting extensively, and quoting widely from historical and sociological texts written about the Mohawk, Chippewa and Ottawa peoples. Hers is not a sentimental novel, but a non-fiction collection of her thoughts culled from the journal she penned as she traveled “what was then considered the far western frontier in mid-nineteenth-century America” (S. Smith vii). At times she makes obvious attempts to be sympathetic and to view Native peoples as human and equal, but despite her best efforts, she is too much of her own time and place—or to use the rhetoric of this project, she is too much ensconced in a Euro-American sphere to escape her belief in the “Vanishing Indian” or the normalization of continual white usurpation of land.

Her discussion, however, is more philosophical and introspective than Child's and Sedgwick's. Genre, of course, is a factor. That Fuller writes a first person, non-fiction narrative, a travelogue of her time spent in the then wilds of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, lends her the literary room to put rhetoric to explicit use in ways that Child and Sedgwick writing fiction cannot. Yet, even with the overt rhetorical stance available to Fuller by way of the non-fiction genre and even with her obvious sympathy for the deteriorating situation of Native nations, Fuller's Indians also must vanish; whereas Child placed the blame on fate and Sedgwick on state as well as the Indian's own choice, savagery and inferiority, Fuller attributes it to unalterable human nature. Tellingly, she writes,

Could their own intelligent men be left to act unimpeded in their behalf, they would do far better for them than the white thinker, with all his general knowledge. But we dare not hope the designs of such will not always be frustrated by the same barbarous selfishness they were in Georgia. There was a chance of seeing what might have been done, now lost forever. (144)

In other words, Fuller claims that, left alone, the Indians can best help themselves rather than be helped by well-meaning whites. She "dare not hope," though, to believe that Indians will be left alone and cites the "barbarous selfishness" in Georgia—that is, the removal of the Cherokee by the United States on behalf of the citizens of that state—as proof that what is best for Native nations will "always be frustrated." She ends that particular chapter of her travelogue by entreating her readers to change their attitudes and actions towards Indians, but the rhetoric that comes before that statement shows that she

does not hold out much hope for the alterability of human nature in regards to white American-Native American relations.

Despite my beginning this section by accusing Fuller of learned prejudices, she does write startlingly tolerant, liberal passages. One such description reflects her transcendental leanings and imparts those notions upon a diverse group:

From this one side stretches the town....an old French town, mellow in its coloring, and with the harmonious effect of a slow growth, which assimilates, naturally, with the objects around it. The people in its streets, Indian, French, half-breeds, and others, walked with a leisure step, as of those who live a life of taste and inclination, rather than the hard press of business, as in American towns elsewhere. (107)

In her observation, Mackinaw delivers the best of all possibilities: intelligent people of all races, and mixed races, leisurely contemplating life. They hone their “taste” and “inclination” rather than subject themselves to the grind of the capitalist machine, which would require them to trade their lives for money. Still, the grammar of the sentence hints to us that she sees the scene not as a reality but a possibility. Her picturesque, racially diverse strollers’ leisure steps are merely “*as of those*” who live lives of “taste and inclination.” They mimic her desired picture, they are *like* those, but may not embody that reality.

In another forward thinking moment, Fuller critiques Christianity’s use of scripture to divest Native Americans of their homelands. She writes,

Thus the missionary vainly attempts, by once or twice holding up the cross, to turn deer and tigers into lambs; vainly attempts to convince the red man that a heavenly mandate takes from him his broad lands. He bows his head, but does not at heart acquiesce. He cannot. It is not true; and if it were, the descent of blood through the same channels, for centuries, had formed the habits of thought not so easily to be disturbed. (120)

Here we see her creating what amounts to separate spheres for the white and the Indian, the civilized and the savage, the man of God trying to convert and the man of nature too entrenched to be converted. In the following passage, she uses the term “sphere” explicitly as she reproves the actions and perceptions of a representative of the church: “He [a missionary to the Indians] thought that there was an intrinsic disability in them, to rise above, or go beyond the sphere in which they had so long moved” (119-120). These lines promise just parity, a recognition of “civilized” as defined by the indigenous peoples themselves. Additionally, in these lines she refutes the idea that Indian land loss is a divine mandate: “It is not true” (120). Unfortunately, the promise of being left to worship according to their own beliefs and on their own land goes unfulfilled when Fuller adds, “Amalgamation would afford the only true and profound means of civilization. But nature seems, like all else, to declare, that this race is fated to perish” (120). In Fuller’s estimation, not even an infusion of “civilized,” white blood can help: “Those of mixed blood fade early, and are not generally a fine race. They lose what is best in either type, rather than enhance the value of each, by mingling. There are exceptions, one or two such I know of, but this, it is said, is the general rule” (120). Fuller declares that Indians have a right to the land and defends their tenacious hold on it to their “descent of blood through the same channels, for centuries”; the right to land is embedded deeply.

Unfortunately in her reasoning, that steadfast hold to beliefs proves that the Indian cannot be changed and cannot be “amalgamated” and so naturally must “perish.” Amalgamation would be the introduction of “white blood” into the line of “red blood” and so, for Fuller, would constitute an overlapping of the spheres; she sees the potential for that mixing to lead to “a true and profound civilization” for indigenous Americans. But, alas, from her observations, this amalgamation does not work and the mixed-blood, categorized as Indian and relegated to the Indian sphere, gets the worst of both.

She writes, then, against the grain established by Child and Sedgwick as far as miscegenation (amalgamation) is concerned. The previous authors demonstrate a belief in the possibility of the two races coming together in a positive way through intermarriage (Child’s *Little Hobomok* and Sedgwick’s marriage of Faith Leslie and Oneco). These seemingly happy amalgamations, however, become problematic upon closer inspection. *Little Hobomok* despite being both Indian and English becomes in every respect a proper English gentleman, his Native name and culture erased. And Faith, though Sedgwick portrays her as happy and allows Magawisca and Hope to give their blessings, loses much of her narrative potential to promote cultural mixing when she simply disappears—she becomes a Pequot and vanishes. So, even though the two previous authors seem to throw out a line of hope for Native continuance on the land, if married into white worlds, really what they offer are just two more ways to vanish.

Even so, Fuller’s outright rejection of mixed-blood peoples is hard to reconcile. She follows her anti-miscegenation passage with the even more damning rhetoric of vanishing, equating Indians to the trees that create an atmosphere which “does not agree



with Caucasian lungs” (120). She contrasts the white settlers’ hatred of trees with the Indian’s comfortable existence among them; he, “breathed the atmosphere of the forests freely; he loved their shade” (121). She then delivers this edict: “As they [trees] are effaced from the land, he fleets too; a part of the same manifestation, which cannot linger behind its proper era” (121). Fuller deems Indian peoples out of both place and time, and normalizes the vanishing by choosing the adjective “proper.”

In odd ways, Fuller presents the immanent extinction of Indian peoples as a choice made by Indian women. Because of her status as a successful, single woman at the time she writes this, she could be labeled a proto-feminist. The expectation is that she will consider closely the state of women in various Indian nations, and she does. Fuller compares women’s status in the Mohawk nation as described by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft against that described by “Mrs. Grant.” Although Schoolcraft observes and writes about Native women in more detail, and was herself an Ojibwe (Chippewa) woman, Fuller rejects her explanation that Indian women are “as nearly on par with their husbands as the white woman with hers” and dismisses the idea that although an Indian woman is subjected to hardships, “yet her position, compared with that of the man, is higher and freer than that of the white woman” (108-109). Mrs. Grant gives an interpretation that equates young Native American women and wives to slaves and says that only in old age do women hold “a superior rank in society...allowed to live in ease, and even called to consultations on national affairs” (109). Despite singular instances of “homage paid to women,” Fuller concludes, “it is impossible to look upon the Indian women, without feeling that they do occupy a lower place than women among the nations

of European civilization” (111). Then, curiously, she includes that her observations of the Chippewa “reminded [her] of the tribe mentioned by Mackenzie, where the women destroy their female children, whenever they have a good opportunity” (111). Her intimation here is that the indigenous women’s lot is so detestable, due to the constructs of *their own society*, that the women commit infanticide on their female babies.

Interestingly and importantly, about forty years after Fuller’s text is published, Sarah Winnemucca includes a remarkably similar statement, but the motivation for infanticide comes from *white* men. After suggesting earlier in her narrative that her sister is under constant threat of rape by white men, Winnemucca writes, “My people have been so unhappy for a long time they wish now to *disincrease*, instead of multiply. The mothers are afraid to have more children, for fear they shall have daughters, who are not safe even in their mother’s presence” (48). Whereas Winnemucca suggests that Piute women *wish* to not conceive because of white male threats to Native females, Fuller declares that “habits of drudgery” foisted on Indian women by their own in her estimation patriarchal society cause female infanticide. Fuller continues,

More weariness than anguish, no doubt, falls to the lot of most of these women. They inherit submission, and the minds of the generality accommodate themselves more or less to any posture. Perhaps they suffer less than their white sisters, who have more aspiration and refinement, with little power of self-sustenance. But their place is certainly lower, and their share of the human inheritance less. (111)

In her perception, the only saving grace for poor, degraded Indian women is that they simply don’t know enough to know better.

Despite brief moments of seeming racial parity, much of her writing appears to support the idea of Fuller as too much absorbed in the racial hierarchy of the day to see Native Americans as equals and as a continuing, substantive part of the American narrative. Unfortunately, her perspective remains and inescapably white. She calls “the white man, as yet...a halftamed [sic] pirate” who believes “Might makes right,” and says that civilization is merely a veil that covers up his baseness (121). Twenty-first-century readers then hope and anticipate that she, like the Native American writers who come after her, might question white definitions of savage and civilized by asking “Who is the savage?” in a way that detaches it from race. Instead, Fuller decides that she hasn’t the power to redeem white men or save “the Indian from immediate degradation, and speedy death” (121). In place of that, she longs for

some masterly attempt to reproduce, in art or literature, what is proper to them [Indians], a kind of beauty and grandeur, which few of the every-day crowd have hearts to feel, yet which ought to leave in the world its monuments, to inspire the thought of genius through the ages. (121)

She has, apparently, made peace with the notion that Indians are going to be exterminated, but hopes for some Indian bit of genius (we see in the next few lines, however, that she believes will come from the pen or brush of a *white* man) that the dominant race can either incorporate or consume. Throughout her renderings of Indian custom, culture, stories, and peoples, Fuller cannot escape the idea that the Indians are vanishing and will soon die out all together.

She acknowledges the “nobility of their race” and attempts to create equality between “red and white,” equating through similar bear stories, the “child of Norman-Saxon blood,” with “the Indian” (127). At one point, Fuller goes as far as to ask her readers to “respect the first possessors of our country, and doubt whether we are in all ways worthy to fill their place” (131). However, even in this seemingly supportive statement lies the certainty that the land is “*our* country”—that is, hers and her white readers—and though whites may not be in “all ways worthy” they fill the place anyway. Additionally and with nostalgia typical of her time, she continually trips back into a view that if something of the greatness of their race is to be saved, it will be by white Americans for white Americans. Even in her description of the writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, she remarks that Schoolcraft receives from her white father “enough of European culture to have a standard, by which to judge...native habits and inherited lore” (124). Later in the text she explicitly states, “The historian of the Indians should be one of their own race,” but again she quickly despairs of the real possibility of that and makes clear that the history, whomever it is written by, will be written *for* the surviving Euro-Americans. She exclaims, “[W]e shall be well contented if we can have a collection of genuine fragments...to give the ages a glimpse a what *was* great in Indian life and Indian character” (142 emphasis added).

As if a literary death accompanied by a modicum of preservation for white consumption is not enough, Fuller cannot help but wish for a material and corporeal remembrance of the once great but now vanished race. She writes, “We hope, too, there will be a national institute, containing all the remains of the Indians” and just to be clear

she adds “with a collection of skulls from all parts of the country” (143). Her total immersion in her paternalistic, Euro-American culture allows her on the one hand to offer overtures of equality because in envisioned reality they are meaningless. What does equality matter if those about whom she speaks are already culturally gone and soon will be physically gone—their skulls residing in museum for educated white people to sentimentally mourn over? On the notion of “spheres” Fuller presents to us not a male and a female sphere, but one “like that of the plants and animals, adapted to the uses and enjoyments of this planet, another, which presages and demands a higher sphere”; she calls them also the “mental” and the “instinctive” (135). Although she says that man possesses both natures, she theorizes that the boundaries become permeable as the mental gets the better of the mere “instinctive” (135). Predictably, she assigns to the Indians the sphere of plants and animals and to white men the “higher” one. Though she attempts to place Native Americans in a beneficial light, her statement “the civilized man is a larger mind, but a more imperfect nature than the savage” shows her adherence to the belief of a continuum that places Native peoples intellectually behind. Like the trees that Europeans raze to improve the “atmosphere,” the Indians who are as natural to the land as the trees themselves also succumb to the unalterable desires of European-Americans.

*“Those who think the physical circumstances of Woman would make a part in the affairs of national government unsuitable are by no means those who think it impossible for negroes to endure fieldwork, even during pregnancy”:*  
*Using Race to Negotiate Gender*

All three white-authored texts discussed in this chapter employ strong, female leads paired with or connected to Native Americans. Might this reflect those authors’

recognition of Native women as more acceptably transgressive, able to authoritatively speak transrhetorically across gendered and racial spheres? And if this is the case, does this reflect a certain desire for those authors to align themselves, rhetorically, with their constructed Native others? Mary Conant “goes Native” by marrying and procreating with Hobomok. America and her indigenous inhabitants develop in Hope Leslie those adventurous masculine faculties that, in England, she was “unconscious of possessing.” Fuller creates a cultural closeness with her Indian subjects, setting up an us-versus-them scenario in which her “them” is narrow-minded, white women and her “us” is herself and Indian women: “I have spoken of the hatred felt by the white man for the Indian: with white women it seems to amount to disgust, to loathing. How I could endure the dirt, the peculiar smell of the Indians, and their dwellings, was a great marvel in the eyes of my lady acquaintance” (113). If white women writers align themselves with strong Native women, do they do so in order to pry open the door for themselves? If an Indian *woman* can be strong, public, and political, why, then, can’t a *white* woman be strong, public, and political, too?

In the introduction to *Separate Spheres No More*, Monika M. Elbert uses a quotation from Margaret Fuller’s “Woman in the Nineteenth Century,” an article Fuller originally published in the *Dial* in July of 1843, after Fuller had made her trip out west:

Not only the Indian squaw carries the burden for the camp, but the favorites of Louis the XIV, accompany him in his journeys, and the washerwoman stands at her tub, and carries home her work in all seasons, and in all states of health. Those who think the physical circumstances of Woman would make a part in the affairs of national government unsuitable are by no means those who think it impossible

for negresses to endure fieldwork, even during pregnancy, or for sempstresses to go through their killing labors. (Fuller 34-35; qtd. in Elbert 6)

Using Fuller's words, Elbert suggests that the "underclass" had more access to the public, male sphere but that they also experienced a "greater threat to their safety and well-being" (6). She goes on to say that even middle class, white women who had transgressed their boundaries by joining an illicit space—the theater or a "sect"—had more access, a type of freedom and voice not allowed in the domestic, female sphere.

From this reasoning comes the possibility that Native American women had more access to the male sphere because, by race, they had already violated the cultural notions of Euro-American womanhood. Because of their Native ethnicity, something that put them always and already outside of the socially-sanctioned, white, middle-class, female sphere, they existed outside of that culture, one that regulated gendered spheres by threat of social censure. White society could not take away True Womanhood status from them because Native American women stood outside of the definition. By creating, or in Fuller's case presenting, female characters who safely ventured out of the stereotypical women's sphere, ones who were just Native enough to be already acceptable in their transgression, but who were also domestic enough to resemble, if only a little bit, white women, white women writers created and could exploit that chink in the armor of the male, public, political sphere. Native female characters constituted the key that unlocked the kitchen door. What does this say, then, about how Native women negotiated these multiple, and not entirely separate, spheres: white, middle-class female; white, middle-class male; and Native American?

In order to speak and be heard, Native American women, already two removes from the white, male sphere, had to create rhetorical space that both transgressed and acquiesced to Euro-American gender ideology in order for their grievances to be heard. Or, we could assume a more subversive possibility. Yes, there existed tricky race and gender negotiating that Native American women had to do to escape being silenced. But because of their existence always and already outside both the ideological male and female, white, middle-class spheres, this double removal may have softened the perceived gender boundaries, allowing Native women to use their own cultural rhetorical and political power, slipping in and having their say by being Indian when women were blocked and once in, assuming the role of True Woman when a simple savage would not be heard. To a certain extent, by negotiating race and gender they could become transrhetorical; they could create their own rhetorical situations, moving in and out of personas, manipulating their multiple ethoi in regards to the shifting expectations of their audiences.

Native women by definition had already transgressed the boundaries. The white public both male and female viewed them as exotic other, affording them the stigma (or the power) of the white-perceived stereotype of savage sexuality. The Native American authors discussed in the following chapters existed both within and outside of both gendered rhetorical spaces and assumed the affectation of the “cult of True Womanhood” and white domesticity as needed. All of them had either married white men or lived among white society for extended periods of their lives. They gained agency by using



their knowledge of white culture to create multiply-defined personae and become legible in both white male and female spheres.

As Elbert claims there are problems in “bifurcating the world into separate spheres,” and there is truth that many times the “separate spheres were not always so separate” (16). Despite the fact that scholars now “take a more relaxed approach, especially in terms of the blurred or shifting boundaries between the spheres” (Elbert 1), I maintain that the socially constructed idea of gendered separate spheres was at work in the nineteenth century and so was a construct all women had to work within and against. Rather than think about the sphere ideology in terms of one gender breaking into another’s, it may be productive to consider that what white women writers did was to use sentimental domesticity to make permeable their own and, in that way, create access to men’s sphere. Native women writers clearly learned this tactic as well.

In regards to cultural spheres, what Native women rhetors did, additionally, was to make permeable their Native spheres to non-Native peoples and thus make white spheres permeable by existing and being vocal in them. Native female political-activists opened up the white, male, political and public sphere by actively existing within it and then disrupting it, rhetorically. In so doing, they made permeable the sphere of Native peoples, and at times of Native women in particular, just enough to elicit the assistance required to bring forth political change; that is, to fight for land rights. Native men and women received citizenship at the same time, 1924; however, citizenship did not ensure voting rights for either gender.<sup>11</sup> Many western states refused to allow Native Americans the right to vote (“American Voting Rights Timeline”). The power to change a corrupt

government was decidedly *not* in the hands of Native Americans until or even after 1924 (Native Americans were and are a small percentage of the voting public).

Despite the fact that Elbert is arguing for “blurred and shifting boundaries” of the gendered spheres and for a certain permeability, the fact remains that the starting point is *separate spheres*, imagined or real, that men and women of the nineteenth century acknowledged and to some extent lived within. Elbert recognizes that for all the critical wrangling over definitions, the starting point of the discussions is the existence of an envisioned separateness: “This is not to say that a separate sphere for women did not exist, or to suggest that the middle class ideology of the cult of domesticity was not emulated by the underclass to some degree”; she only argues that an “essentialist, reductionist position is dangerous in coming to terms with the diverging experiences of different kinds of women” (1-2). I agree with her and want to discuss in the chapters that follow four of these “different kinds of women”: Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mary Jemison told her life story to James E. Seaver, a white, male biographer, who transcribed it and subsequently published it in 1824.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to include, as an aside, a short explanation of the concept of coverture as it applied to Euro-American women in America. Although a variety of laws for land ownership were carried over to the new land from the different invading nations, Spain, Holland, and England, most settlers in the New England area and down the east coast primarily followed British common law. Deborah Rosen explains, “Under English common law, a married woman had no control over property and could not execute an enforceable contract, write a will, or initiate a legal action without her husband's consent or participation” (para. 17). In respect to “real property,” that is, land, the husband “also gained the right to manage any real estate belonging to or inherited by his wife; though he could not sell it without her consent, he owned any income earned from the real property” (para. 17). Women could own property; however, that appears to have been the exception rather than the rule. Despite the fact that a father could legally distribute personal property equally amongst sons and daughters, Rosen reports that if a father “died without a will, English law provided that his oldest son would inherit all of his real property....These basic principles were incorporated into New York's legal system by the end of the seventeenth century. In practice, although the great majority of New Yorkers legitimately circumvented primogeniture, they nevertheless favored sons over daughters, especially in the distribution of real property” (para.19). Between 1839 and 1895, all individual states had passed some form of Married Women’s Property Rights Acts.

Some of these Acts, although apparently not all of them, allowed for women to buy and sell property. These laws are in stark contrast to many Native nations; for example, Cherokee women “owned” the land in that they were the ones who farmed and controlled the harvest. As explained in greater detail in chapter three, Cherokee were also matrilineal: men, when they married, moved into the homes (and onto the land) of their wives. In the case of divorce, the men moved out. Additionally, the Cherokee practiced matrilineal descent: children’s clan membership was that of their mother, and their primary male caretaker was not the biological father but the mother’s nearest male relative, usually her brother. This afforded Cherokee women autonomy not available to women in Euro-American, patriarchal societies.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Heidi Hanrahan for this idea of white women gaining agency via Native American women. She describes this relationship in her 2005 dissertation “Competing for the Reader: The Writer/Editor Relationship in Nineteenth-Century American Literature,” specifically when writing about the relationship between Sarah Winnemucca and her editor Mary Peabody Mann.

<sup>4</sup> Emerson wrote an impassioned letter to Martin Van Buren supporting the Cherokee nation’s right to stay on their ancestral land. A copy of the letter can be accessed from the RWE Institute website at <http://www.rwe.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> Noble writes, “[M]asochists see suffering as an undesirable fee they have to pay for the love they crave” (12). So, for readers to allow Hobomok to truly love Mary Conant, he must pay his “undesirable fee” and become a martyr-masochist in their eyes.

<sup>6</sup> While it is true that Charles Brown still represents some anti-patriarchal sentiment in that he is Episcopalian and so not favored by Mary's father, he is still a Euro-American male who will presumably uphold the division of gendered domains.

<sup>7</sup> The word choice of "passed away" also invokes the "Vanishing Indian" not just in terms of removal but in terms of death: tribes dying out completely.

<sup>8</sup> With her poignant, single tear, Magawisca also plays the part of the noble savage, predating the Iron Eyes Cody littering commercial of the 1970s by 150 years.

<sup>9</sup> As a brief but significant aside, I would like to point out how this passage precedes by over 50 years a similarly worded but deeply different passage in Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins' *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*. Near the end of *Life Among the Piutes* Winnemucca writes, "Ah, then you rise from your bended knee and seizing the welcoming hands of those who are the owners of this land, which you are not, your carbines rise upon the bleak shore" (207). I discuss this work in length in chapter four, but I want to note here that Winnemucca changes the direction of action as compared with Sedgwick. In *Hope Leslie* Magawisca asks "Can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us?" suggesting that her people, the Pequots, cannot befriend those whom they view as hostile, the whites. Grammatically, the responsibility as to whether or not the handshake can occur lies with the Pequots. If the whites were to proffer a handshake of friendship, the Indians, as suggested by the rhetorical construction of Magawisca's question, would refuse it. Therefore, the way that Sedgwick words it, the direction of potential amity is from whites to Pequots; the Pequots, despite their valid

reasons, are the ones who reject any possibility of white friendship. In Winnemucca's passage the direction is reversed; her people, the Piutes, present the hand of friendship to whites, but *their* offer is met with hostility. Winnemucca writes, "[Y]ou rise from bended knees and seizing the welcoming hands of those who are the owners of this land, which you are not, your carbines rise upon the bleak shore" (207). White settlers rise up from their position of prayer (bended knees) and seize (a hostile action) the welcoming hands (a friendly gesture) of the indigenous peoples who rightfully own the land. In both situations, the whites are the aggressors: the hand raised to strike, the carbines (short-barreled rifles) pointed at the bleak shore. The difference lies in the direction of friendship offered and hostility returned. Whereas grammatically the Pequots refuse the hand of friendship from whites (even taking into consideration that that hand, from a Pequot perspective, is "raised to strike"), in Winnemucca's passage it is the Piute people who offer a welcoming hand but instead of receiving friendship are "seized" and then face the guns of the whites. Winnemucca, in the midst of the violent clash of the two cultures, maintains the depiction her people as welcoming, a reoccurrence throughout her book. Her passage continues "your so-called civilization sweeps inland from the ocean wave; but, oh, my God! Leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood and strewn by the bones of two races, the inheritor and the invader" (207), making clear that the Native peoples own the land via inheritance and that attempted white take over of land is a brutal invasion.

<sup>10</sup> Sedgwick provides one exception to her silencing of Native Americans. Near the beginning of the novel, she has Magawisca retell the story of King Philip's War to Everell, presenting it from an Indian perspective.

<sup>11</sup> Some Native Americans received citizenship earlier, but all were made American citizens in 1924.

## CHAPTER II

### NANCY WARD AND NARCISSA OWEN:

#### CHEROKEE WOMEN'S TRANSRHETORICAL PROTEST AGAINST LAND THEFT

[The stomp dance] embodies a Cherokee construction of gender. The sound of the rattles summons a world in which women and men balance each other as surely as rhythm and words combine to make the stomp dance. ~ Theda Perdue<sup>1</sup>

Cherokee culture functions on balances, the most basic being that men's and women's contributions weigh equally. Conceiving of their society as a "system of categories that opposed and balanced one another" sets Cherokee people apart from the Western principles of hierarchy that govern non-Native America (Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 13). Because of their culture's belief in balance, Cherokee women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enjoyed a level of power and prestige unknown to most Euro-American women of those times. Whereas white women needed to look for loopholes in order to enter and then be legible in the male rhetorical sphere, Cherokee women operated from a cultural space that expected a voiced female perspective and simply assumed their right to speak. Theda Purdue argues "The balance that Cherokees sought to achieve...between men and women may not have permitted equality in a modern sense, but their concern with balance made hierarchy, which often serves to oppress women, untenable" (*Cherokee Women* 13). Within a Cherokee world, women's public, political voices balanced men's as normatively as agriculture balanced hunting and the power of the sun balanced that of the moon.



Nancy Ward (Nan-ye-hi) and Narcissa Owen evince the culturally persistent notions of balanced power experienced by Cherokee women. Ward lived from c.1738 to c.1822 when no question existed within the Cherokee nation of balanced equality between the genders. She died before Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830 and before Cherokee forced removal, "The Trail of Tears," which lasted from 1836 through 1838. Owen was born in 1831, one year after the Removal Act passed, and was almost 80 years old when she died in 1911. During her lifetime, the Cherokee nation sorted into four groups: the "Old Settlers" who opted to remove in the early 1800s before being forced; the Ross Party who resisted removal but were evicted from their lands after the signing of the Treaty of New Echota; the Treaty Party consisting of those who signed the Treaty of New Echota against the wishes of the nation, relinquishing to the U.S. government all Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi; and those who found ways to stay on their eastern homelands and became the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Owen lived to see the Cherokee fight on the side of the south in the Civil War, to see the Eastern Cherokee buy back their own land from the federal government, and to see the Ross and Treaty parties, who were removed to Oklahoma, reconcile and recreate the Cherokee nation. While Ward and Owen experienced differences in time and place, both used their transrhetorical ability to publicly defend Cherokee land rights.

Nancy Ward spoke against removal before it happened, when she still believed (and it was true) that her powerful female voice affected U.S. treaty commissioners and when Cherokee women's input functioned as crucially as men's, especially on matters of peace and war. The speeches discussed in this chapter are ones she gave in 1781 and

1785 to U.S. Treaty Commissioners and one she gave in 1817 to the Cherokee Council of Chiefs. Owen, on the other hand, delivered her rhetoric in the form of a memoir written and published in 1907. She wrote without the aid of a translator or editor because she was a thoroughly literate, English speaking woman, and, in fact, generous portions of her rhetoric are given over to chastising those Americans who could only envision Indians as illiterate, uncultured stereotypes. In her memoir, Owen re-presents the already packaged history of forced removal, long after the fact, by offering a Cherokee retelling of that event and others. Though they came from different eras, different physical places, and different socio-political choices, both women employed commanding rhetoric that reflects the gender equality inherent in the Cherokee society. Because Ward and Owen required legibility from white audiences as well as Cherokee, they recognized the necessity of combining their culturally normative gender parity with an intimate knowledge of the gender hierarchy in place in the white world. However different the times, places, and positions from which these women reacted, the two used their transrhetorical abilities to respond in Ward's case to the continued threat of land loss and dispossession and in Owen's case to the results of unlawful forced removal. I argue that they respond similarly to the painful consequences of the United States illegally taking Cherokee ancestral land. Each asserts a connection to, and a rightful place on, the land and each acknowledges the fact that not only is the land handed down to the Cherokee by the ancestors, the land *is* itself the ancestors. With the rhetorical goals of land retention for Ward and justice and compensation for Owen, the women set about creating a Cherokee female space within a decidedly white, male, rhetorical sphere. Both of them,

as can be discerned through their words, recognize the restrictions the patriarchal American society places on female activists, women who choose to use written or spoken words as their weapons against oppression. Both women work to subvert those Euro-American, white, male constructs by manipulating Euro-American gendered domains using their longstanding Cherokee beliefs in the power of women's voices.

In this chapter I provide background information on the construction of traditional Cherokee gender norms. I relate historical context essential to the understanding of Ward's rhetoric, relating her position as Cherokee War Woman to the Euro-American concept of Republican Mother. And, I analyze Ward's transrhetorical ability as reflected in her speeches. Next, in order to discuss Owen's memoir, I include details about her family lineage, tracing her somewhat tenuous connection to the Cherokee nation, and offer historical details about the eras that impact her rhetoric. I follow with an analysis of her ability to critique male, written, historical accounts of Cherokee events and supplant them with Cherokee women's oral history, to include her argument for the validity of the latter. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of the legacy of gender equity within the Cherokee nation, focusing on the continued strength of women's political voices in both the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

*"We are your mothers": Cherokee Gender Balance*

Cherokee constructs of gender differed greatly from that of Euro-Americans in at least three areas: agriculture; domesticity, to include home and children; and socio-political power. In each area, women assumed a role equal to that of men, and at times

they wielded greater authority. Though the Cherokee clearly divided labor into men's and women's work, their society's balanced structure afforded autonomy to women and worked to maintain an equality and an interdependence between the genders.

Whereas in Euro-American society, agriculture was part of the male domain, in the Cherokee world men hunted and women farmed the land and controlled the harvest. This division of labor stems from a foundational story of Selu and Kana'ti, two of the earliest inhabitants of the world. Selu, the mother, fed her family by rubbing her stomach and armpits to produce corn and beans. Kana'ti brought home game by moving a rock away from the mouth of a cave and taking only one animal at a time. According to the story, Selu's sons kill her, but before they do, she instructs them to drag her body in a circle seven times over the ground; from her blood corn grows. The boys also remove the rock from the cave opening, and all the animals escape. Kana'ti leaves the boys, but eventually they follow his trail, ending in the upper world. There they find their parents, Selu and Kana'ti, sitting side by side and balance and harmony is restored.<sup>2</sup> The story establishes the basic division of labor: women will control the agriculture and men will hunt. Because of the contrary actions of the boys, not all of which I have related in this brief summary, corn can only be cultivated twice a year and crops must be tended for many months rather than for just one night. Men might help clear land, but the actual farming was the domain of women. Women worked hard as the primary providers, growing crops, harvesting, gathering wild foodstuffs, and preparing vegetables and meat. However difficult their lot, Perdue conjectures "Perhaps the women willingly performed most of the work in Cherokee society because they also controlled the fruits of their

labor, the crops: the means of production, the land; and, ultimately, the result of production, the children” (*Cherokee Women* 25). Along with controlling agriculture, women’s authority extended to the site of domesticity, the household, in ways unfamiliar to Euro-Americans.

The Cherokee lived in a matrilocal and matrilineal society.<sup>3</sup> Matrilocal denotes female “ownership” of a household residence. Upon marriage, a bridegroom moved into the home of the woman. However, despite residing with the woman, he did not become part of his bride’s kin or gain membership in her clan. As a matrilineal society the Cherokee traced kinship through mothers only. The status of the mother determined the children’s clan membership in one of the seven clans that made up the Cherokee nation; for example, if a mother was *Anisahoni*, Blue Clan, then her children were as well.<sup>4</sup> Children were not considered to be in a kinship relationship with their biological fathers. The only permanent male members of the family household were those related to the mother, her brothers or sons. This familial arrangement gave women an autonomy not present in Euro-American society. In the case of divorce, a Cherokee woman would not lose her home nor would she lose the protection or hunting potential of a male provider. Additionally, upon divorce, the man returned to the household of his mother or sisters, and the children remained with the woman. Although women did not tend to marry multiple husbands, women could and did practice serial monogamy, divorcing and remarrying at their own discretion. While Cherokee men commonly practiced marriage to multiple women at the same time, Perdue suggests that their sororal polygamy (marriage to a set of sisters) afforded women “a high degree of personal autonomy” and

created a dynamic in which there was little to no “male domination or sexual competition” (*Cherokee Women* 44). Unlike wives in a patriarchal society, Cherokee women exercised definitive control over their marital and family situations.

The production of children and the biological circumstances of that production gave Cherokee women the same cultural authority as men. Traditionally, the Cherokee believed that women and men both had power through the shedding of blood: women in childbirth and men in battle. Blood was the most powerful of substances, and because women bled once a month the Cherokee considered them “both powerful and dangerous,” especially during that time (Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 29). Self-administered social restrictions for women during menstruation, while pregnant, and just after childbirth paralleled similar restrictions for men just before and after they engaged in warfare. During times of bloodletting, both men and women became unusually powerful; they, therefore, required ceremonies to return them to normal status. Extraordinary individuals could wield power in both areas: they could give birth to children and could shed blood in battle. To those who did, such as Nancy Ward, the Cherokee bestowed the title of War Woman.<sup>5</sup> Because women balanced men in all things, they played an indispensable role in political decision-making. As could be imagined, this mode of thinking sharply contrasted with ideas about women and politics held by members of Euro-American society. For example, as noted in the epigraph that begins this project, Ward’s uncle, the influential Attakullakulla, when negotiating a treaty with South Carolina in 1757 “was shocked to find that no white women were present” (Johnston 1).

*“Let your women hear our words”: The Speeches of Nancy Ward*

Nancy Ward, or Nan-ye-hi as she was called by the Cherokee, earned the honor of War Woman before she reached the age of twenty. However, during the complicated times of the Revolutionary War many years later, she came to be viewed as both a hero and a traitor to her people, particularly in terms of the fight to retain land. She displayed heroic bravery in battle when she was just a teenager, but during the Revolutionary War she acted against the majority of her nation by warning American settlers about British and Cherokee raids. When the focus is on the attempt of the Cherokee to retain their ancestral homeland, Ward can be viewed as a strong voice of reason staunchly against additional land cession; however, in light of her actions during the Revolutionary War, she can also be seen as someone who, without intending to, helped to create a situation in which the Americans claimed additional Cherokee lands as the spoils of victory.

Accurate analysis of the rhetoric used in her speeches depends at least partially on knowing her personal history, and also on knowing about the rapidly changing status of U.S.-Cherokee relations. In her political responses to the conflicts that engulfed her and her people, Ward deployed various *ethoi* based on the constructs of a Cherokee mother and War Woman and on American notions of the Republican Mother. Functioning *transrhetorically*, in multiple speeches to both white male and Cherokee audiences, she delivered the message that, in order to survive, the Cherokee must not cede land.

The Cherokee bestowed the title of War Woman on Nan-ye-hi in 1755 after the successful Battle of Taliwa against the Creeks. The story of how Nan-ye-hi became a

War Woman is well-known and many-times-told. She married a Cherokee man named Kingfisher when she was in her teens. A few years later at Taliwa, she followed Kingfisher into battle; Cherokee women often accompanied their husbands into battles so that they could provide food and care for weapons. When Kingfisher was killed, Nan-ye-hi took up his weapons and continued fighting. The Cherokees defeated the Creeks, and for her ability to shed blood in battle as well as in childbirth (she had recently given birth to her second child), Nan-ye-hi was named War Woman. Her actions and subsequent title earned her political privileges above other male and female members of her nation: she had a voice on the Council of Chiefs, led the Woman's Council, took part in specific clan ceremonies, and had the power to spare the lives of people captured by the Cherokee (Smith and Wilson 18).

Nan-ye-hi became Nancy Ward when she married Bryan Ward (born in Ireland), in 1756. They had one child together, Elizabeth, but only functioned as a married couple for a few years, after which Bryan Ward returned to South Carolina and reunited with his white wife and family. Despite the brevity of their union, this and other culture-crossings that Ward would come to experience confirm her ability to co-exist in both the white and Cherokee worlds—one tangible bit of evidence being that years later Nancy Ward stayed for a time as a guest in the Wards' home. Another piece of evidence as to Ward's exposure to and knowledge of Euro-American society was her association with a white woman, Mrs. William Bean, whom she saved from execution during the Revolutionary War. The Bean family lived illegally in a settlement along the Holston River (now northeastern Tennessee) on land that was by rights of treaty, Cherokee (Perdue, *Cherokee*



*Women* 54). Mrs. Bean was captured during the Siege of Fort Caswell in 1776 (Williams 44). Perdue writes that Ward, “took Mrs. Bean to her house and, according to oral tradition, learned from her how to make butter” (*Cherokee Women* 54). One can imagine, during the course of her captivity with the Cherokee, the interaction with Bean provided Ward with other cultural information as well. In a third recorded cultural intersection, sometime before 1780 Ward’s daughter Betsy (presumably Elizabeth, from her marriage to Bryan Ward) married General Joseph Martin (then a major) (Williams 37). Martin served as a key officer in the Revolutionary War, fighting on the side of the colonists. From these and probably many other cultural interchanges, the assumption can be made that Nancy Ward had on-going, positive contact with the white people in and around the Cherokee nation starting at least from the time she was a teenager in 1756.

The years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War were turbulent times for the Cherokee. They had made treaties with the British in an attempt to protect Cherokee land rights from continually encroaching colonial settlers. Therefore, when the war began, most Cherokee aligned themselves with the British, who they believed would uphold treaties and keep the intruding Americans off their land. However, Ward saw the necessity of working with American settlers. Smith and Wilson muse that “her choice could have been motivated by friendship and the belief that the Cherokee had goods and services to trade. She was weary of war. She may have assumed the role of ‘cultural broker’” (17). I would add that her overtures for peace may have been prompted by the fact that she was the niece of peace chief Attakullakulla. A second factor could have been the union between her daughter and the American officer, Martin; but “whatever her

motivation, soon after the Revolution began, Nancy Ward threw her support to the Americans” (Smith and Wilson 17). This choice placed Ward in the difficult position of having to act against her own people.

In December of 1780, Ward warned the Americans twice about impending Cherokee attacks, one planned and led by her cousin, the Cherokee patriot Dragging Canoe. In the first instance, Ward sent two traders, Isaac Thomas and Ellis Harlin, “to give warning that a large body of the Indians was about to march against the white inhabitants” (Williams 184). By notifying the Americans, Ward may have hoped to gain their favor so that they might spare her particular Cherokee township, Chota; in gratitude for that first warning, American troops did forbear. Colonel William Campbell reported the following about Ward’s second attempt to notify American troops about an attack:

The famous Indian woman, Nancy Ward, came to camp; she gave us various intelligence and made an overture in behalf of some of the chiefs for peace, to which I avoided giving an explicit answer, as I wished first to visit the vindictive part of the nation...and to distress the whole as much as possible by destroying their habitations and provisions. (qtd. in Williams 189)

In addition to providing military intelligence, Ward ordered a small herd of her cattle to be slaughtered to feed the American troops, who had gone many days without sufficient rations. Despite these offerings and efforts at peace talks, Ward’s attempt to save her people failed; Chota, as well as Tellico and Little Tuskegee were razed (Williams 188-189). Eventually, as punishment for siding with the British, the victorious American government forced the Cherokee to cede land. Because she warned the Americans about

impending raids, Ward may have had a hand in the Americans' defeat of the British and so may have inadvertently aided in the additional loss of the Cherokee national land holdings. Whether or not this was the case, her actions went against the majority of the Cherokee, and so some people then, and some to this day, look upon her as a traitor.

However detrimental Ward's support of the Americans may have been for the Cherokee nation, William Campbell's connecting her to the peace chiefs along with her kinship connection to Attakullakulla could be evidence that she acted as she did in the hopes of bringing about peace. Also, from Campbell's statement that she "made an overture in behalf of some of the chiefs for peace," the assumption can be made that she acted as a leader, someone whose voice and standing was recognized and respected within the Cherokee nation. In 1780, Ward would have been in her early forties and could have been seen as an elder as well as a War Woman by the Cherokee. That white men also knew of her authoritative position is evinced by Campbell referring to her as the "famous Indian woman." Her speeches reflect both her desire for peace and her confidence in her rhetorical position. More importantly, though, her words show her unyielding desire for the entire Cherokee nation to stay on Cherokee homeland.

Just as she is a problematic historical figure, Ward is also a problematic rhetor. Copies of her speeches to American treaty parties and to the Cherokee Council exist, but these are transcribed, not written by her own hand. Did she speak in English or in Cherokee and, if in Cherokee, who translated her words into English? Additionally, transcribers name Ward as rhetor of some of the extant speeches, but others are attributed to "Cherokee Women and Ward"; we cannot be completely certain which words are hers.

Regardless of the inherent problems, the speeches are exceedingly valuable for the glimpse they give into the social and political potency of women within the Cherokee nation, as well as being a testament to women's strength as politicians and speakers. The transcripts also provide crucial evidence for *women's* stand on land rights, land protection, and land cession.<sup>6</sup> We have ample evidence of the positions men took: Stand Wattie, Elias Boudinot, Major Ridge and John Ridge, and John Ross have their political actions and views preserved in many historical documents. Women, however, rarely appear in the historical records. Ward's speeches are our window. As the speeches clearly express, Cherokee women largely refused to support land sales and land cession: a group of them, including Ward, state on May 2, 1817 that voluntarily letting go of any additional land would be like "destroying your mothers" (Ward et al 29).<sup>7</sup>

Fortunately, at least two transcriptions survive that can be attributed directly to Nancy Ward. Additionally, there exists a petition to President Franklin signed by Ward and two other Cherokee women, and three petitions to the Cherokee Council credited to "Cherokee Women and Ward," one of which was printed in the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Unearthing the facts about these texts is difficult, if not impossible. The petition in the *Phoenix* was printed in 1831, a decade after Ward died. It is possible that Ward authored the petition in 1821, but as yet I have found no verification of the exact date. Nevertheless, at a certain level authorship is unimportant, as long as these texts can be attributed to the women of the Cherokee nation. Each speech and petition reflects a historical moment in relation to removal, and each also reveals Ward's and other

Cherokee women's rhetorical abilities. In the interest of simplicity and readability, I assume that Ward is the primary author.<sup>8</sup>

With that in mind, in her speeches and petitions Ward clearly constructs her ethos specifically for the purposes of delivering her message on land retention to her particular audiences, white and Cherokee. Using rhetoric designed to evoke particular emotions about motherhood, Ward attempts to tap into the social constructs recognized by her multiple audiences, in essence creating them in such a way so that they might best receive her message against removal and land cession. She attempts to manipulate her white, male audience members to reconstruct their conception of themselves and of the Cherokee other; she tries to alter their "truth" by supplanting it with hers. Speaking as a Cherokee to a Cherokee audience, her ethos is derived from the aforementioned cultural notion that the blood loss involved in motherhood balanced and equaled the blood loss by men in war. Speaking transrhetorically to the white, male audience of U.S. Treaty Commissioners, Ward taps into the emerging definition of what Linda Kerber has labeled "Republican Womanhood."<sup>9</sup> As a politically active, independent Indian woman, farming her own land and managing her own herds of cattle, Ward did not fit the emerging, Euro-American definition of the Republican Woman, but she could assume that role when she needed to, to give herself agency with a white male audience. Kerber explains Euro-American constructs of the Republican Woman: "[T]heorists created a mother who had political purpose, and argued that her domestic behavior had a direct political function in the republic" (202); that is, the political role created for American women confined them to the home, the site of "domestic behavior." Rather than vote or speak publicly, women

deferred to men and influenced the nation by instilling republican virtues in their husbands and sons (200-202). No such deference existed in a Cherokee definition of motherhood, and because Ward was obviously other, that is outside the definition of Republican Mother, she freely entered the white, male, public and political sphere rather than remain within the domestic one. Once in, Ward worked transrhetorically with the multiple definitions of motherhood creating multiple ethoi legible to multiple audiences.

One of Ward's early speeches was presented to the U.S. Treaty Commissioners in 1781. Her words and the response to them by Colonel William Christian are recorded by Samuel Cole Williams in his book *Tennessee during the Revolutionary War*, originally published in 1944.<sup>10</sup> In 1781, with the Revolutionary War nearing its end, Ward stepped into the role of peace-keeper.<sup>11</sup> The Cherokee suffered greatly during the war, and Ward knew that their suffering could only increase because of the American's defeat of the British. Historian Ken Martin writes

While initially successful in striking numerous devastating blows to the frontier settlements, large expeditions of Colonial forces began to destroy Cherokee towns. Reports of the expeditions said that practically every Cherokee man or woman encountered was either killed and scalped or sold into slavery. Over 50 towns were burned and all crops and livestock taken or destroyed. A peace treaty was signed in 1777 which ceded nearly all of South Carolina to the colonists and much of north and eastern Tennessee. ("History of the Cherokee")

Ward's rhetorical goal, as seen with a closer inspection of her speech, was to manipulate the actions of her audience by using both Cherokee and Euro-American cultural definitions of motherhood. Appealing to motherhood allowed her to voice a call for

continued and lasting peace, which she could then use to avert further encroachment by white settlers onto Cherokee land and thus could use to prevent additional land cession.

Her 1781 speech to an audience of Cherokee headmen, Cherokee women, and white treaty commissioners, survives, possibly due to the transcription of the man who responded to it, Colonel Christian. Early in that year, the Cherokee were ready to negotiate “for peace, an exchange of prisoners and an adjustment of boundaries” with the colonists, who, after a number of battles, had gained the stronghold (Williams 199).

Williams writes that the “main object sought to be attained by the settlers...was to keep the old Overhill towns and those of the Chickamaugas [two factions within the Cherokee nation] from combining against [the Americans]” (199). On February 26, General Nathaniel Greene appointed “Christian, William Preston, Arthur Campbell, and Joseph Martin [Ward’s son-in-law] of Virginia and Robert Sevier, Evan Shelby, Joseph Williams, and John Sevier of North Carolina to treat with the Cherokees and Chickasaws for adjustment of boundaries and suspension of hostilities” (Bennett et al. 15). Cherokee leader, Oconostota sent messengers, Clanosee and Ancoo, to Martin on April 28 explaining his peoples’ decision to side with the British “due to the designs of Colonel Brown,” a representative of the British Army who had urged them to fight against the colonists as a means of staving off further land theft by settlers who had been stealing Indian goods and driving off Indian horses (Bennett et al. 15, 16). Through his messengers, Oconostota sent word to Martin that he hoped Martin would “secure peace for them once more” (Bennett et al. 15). The treaty meeting eventually took place approximately a week after its July 20, 1781 scheduled date. During the meeting,

Christian suggested a prisoner exchange and Martin made a speech, the contents of which are not recorded. In response, another respected Cherokee, The Tassel, spoke for the faction of the tribe called the Chickamaugas, expressing his approval for what Martin had said and promising to keep the peace, securing this with a presentation of a string of beads to Colonel John Sevier as a token of friendship (Bennett et al. 16). After Sevier answered him, writes Williams, “there was an occurrence that is without parallel in the history of the West. An Indian woman spoke in treaty negotiations with the whites” (200). The woman was, of course, Nancy Ward.

The words Ward delivered are brief, but worthy of close inspection because, in response to these words, Williams writes that “Chivalry mounted to a control over cupidity in the hearts and minds of the bordermen [sic]. The negotiations were concluded without any demand for a cession of territory on the part of the people of the ‘Pocahontas of the West’,” Nancy Ward (201).<sup>12</sup> Williams records Ward’s speech as follows:

You know that women are always looked upon as nothing; but we are your mothers; you are our sons. Our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women’s sons be ours; our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words. (qtd. in Williams 201; Ward 27)

Although it is unclear if she spoke in Cherokee or in English, because of her long association with white people we might assume that she had ample command of the English language. In a speech directed toward and meant to influence American treaty officers, if she could speak English, she most likely did.<sup>13</sup> There exists evidence from the *Tennessee Papers* that either some Cherokee women were speaking in English or that



Colonel Christian understood Cherokee: under the listing for “[1781 July] 1XX49 (2)”

the authors of the papers state:

[Christian, Col. William] Talk to Indian mothers. Has been much affected by their talk; their words and thoughts show human nature everywhere the same; the women of the white people will be touched by their words; their people will be disturbed no more if they will keep the peace. (Bennett et al. 17-18)

Moving past the logistics of language to focus on content, employing a close reading analysis shows that Ward clearly understood the rhetoric necessary to influence her white, male audience members, while still utilizing her power as a Cherokee War Woman and mother. Using her transrhetorical agency, in her 1781 speech Ward staves off, if only briefly, American treaty officers’ desire for more Cherokee lands.

Ward begins her speech with a statement uncharacteristic of Cherokee women: “You know that women are always looked upon as nothing.” As previously stated, the Cherokee believed in a balanced society, a society in which men and women shared power equally, and in 1781 that balance was still intact.<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely that Ward truly believed that women were “nothing”; however, upon close inspection, that is not actually what she says. She begins with the second person: “*You* know.” She does not assert that women are nothing, nor does she say that *she* or the Cherokee people believe women to be nothing. She addresses her audience members with the second person “you” and so grammatically suggests, that the white, male treaty officers are the ones who “know” women to be nothing.

Her direct address could be considered accusatory if not for her deft insertion of passive voice, which removes responsibility, at least partially, from her listeners. She gives them a grammatical loophole; because of the passive voice, her listeners can, with her, point the finger. *They* don't look on women as nothing; they simply know that some unnamed others always look upon women as nothing. With her choice of phrasing, Ward simultaneously acknowledges a Euro-American patriarchy that believes women are or should be invisible within the sphere of public politics, but then she undercuts that patriarchy merely by standing and speaking. With what she says, she gives her audience the rhetorical space to resist the separation of gender domains as well. In the moment when she stands and speaks, her white, male audience members are given leave to alter their socially-constructed, self perception and agree that women can and do speak publicly about politics; they can no longer look upon women as nothing. This briefly but safely gives the audience rhetorical space, when functioning specifically as audience to this message, to be on her side as she asserts the power of women.

She then declares, "but we are your mothers; you are our sons." Using Cherokee notions of kinship ties and female power gained through childbirth, along with her knowledge of gender hierarchy in the Euro-American culture, she creates a rhetorical situation in which her audience must listen to her as an equal or even as their superior. Her audience at this treaty meeting included the aforementioned American, white, male commissioners but also Cherokee men and chiefs and Cherokee women.<sup>15</sup> Certainly the Cherokee knew her as a respected War Woman and an elder. But, did the Cherokee at that treaty meeting blame her for their losses because she had warned the colonists?

White officers must have known of her status, because a year earlier Campbell had called her the “famous Indian woman.” Therefore, did the treaty commissioners have a greater respect for her because they knew of her service to them during the war and because she was the mother-in-law of General Martin? Whatever power she did not automatically receive because of her War Woman status or her service to the United States during the Revolutionary War, she took by using the rhetoric of motherhood, negotiating the societal meanings inherent for both cultures so as to effectively argue her point.

As mentioned, the Cherokee, a matrilineal society, traced kinship through mothers only; children were not considered in a kinship relationship with their fathers, and clan membership was determined by the mother. If a family member died, “Cherokees adopted captives to fill particular slots in the matrilineal structure,” and, again, the clan membership of the adoptee depended on that of the adoptive mother (Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 54). Clan membership carried with it great responsibility and great protection. Perdue writes, “The Cherokees could interact peacefully with their old enemies only if they incorporated the outsiders into their kinship system” (*Cherokee Women* 48). In this instance, Perdue was writing about a peace treaty the Cherokee made with the Senecas, but it applies equally to Ward’s overtures to the treaty commissioners. The colonists acted as enemies to the Cherokee during the Revolutionary War. If peace could be brokered, then the colonists must assume, if only rhetorically, some role within the clan and kinship system. The Cherokee system of justice relied upon clan retaliation for wrongs done. “If one Cherokee killed another, the clan kin of the slain person had the

responsibility of avenging the death” (Perdue *Cherokee Women* 49-50); without a clan, a person had no protection from being killed.

Perdue explains that the position of “mother” was “a social rather than a strictly biological role. Children in fact had many ‘mothers,’ maternal aunts and other female clan members of their biological mother’s generation. The same rules of behavior governed their interactions with all their ‘mothers’” (47). Through the assertion of motherhood and by calling the treaty officers by the kinship term “sons,” Ward integrated them into her clan and into the protective fold of the Cherokee nation. Her fellow Cherokee men and women would have understood the social and political importance of these adoptive kinship ties invoked by Ward; unfortunately, her white audience may have not comprehended in the same way. Despite a possible lack of understanding on the part of treaty officers, she appears to have been successful using the rhetoric of Cherokee motherhood; Williams’ assertion that after Ward spoke “negotiations were concluded without any demand for a cession of territory” supports the efficacy of her speech. How, then, does she use her transrhetorical ethos to accomplish her goal of retaining Cherokee land?

For the Cherokee men and women present, Ward’s reference to motherhood was a reminder of her strength being equal to a man’s through the letting of blood. Perdue explains, “Motherhood was not trite sentimentality to Cherokees. Cherokee women invoked motherhood as the source of their power and used their status as mothers to make public appeals” (55). But for the white men, Ward needed to manipulate their emotions by invoking domestic ideals of Republican Motherhood rather than through

Cherokee gender balance. With that in mind, her speech may have affected them in ways they may not have prepared for when coming to treat with Indian *men* for land. As noted, Ward started her 1781 speech with, “You know that women are always looked upon as nothing.” Parsed out grammatically, by using passive voice she ascribes the sentiment to no person or group in particular. However, by using the second person “you” she places it in the realm of the white, male listeners rather than in her own Cherokee cultural sphere. Having gained entry into the white male rhetorical sphere through the novelty of being a publicly political Indian woman, Ward must then gain agency by using rhetoric legible to her targeted audience: the narrative of domesticity.

After she asserts “our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever,” she again binds her audience to the Cherokee kinship system by requesting, “Let your women’s sons be ours; our sons be yours” (Ward 27; qtd. in Williams 201). By reiterating the familial connections, she reminds them of the kinship system she has put into place: in a Cherokee way of understanding, she has symbolically adopted them into her clan and is their mother. However, by bringing their own mothers into the equation she connects them to a familiar domestic relationship that reflects their own ideals of mother and son. Whether or not Ward was conscious of the emerging notion of Republican Motherhood, she had spent ample time in and around white society, so much so that it can safely be assumed she had observed the bond between white mothers and their sons. The white men in her audience most likely received her words as evoking a Euro-American mother-son bond and were reminded that in the newly forming nation mothers shouldered the responsibility for instilling virtue in their sons.

Despite the differences in how Cherokee mothers and Euro-American mothers asserted their political influence, Ward creates the connection between white and Cherokee mothers simply by the fact that both are mothers and both have sons. Her created connection between mothers then paves the way for kinship ties between sons. To create a brotherhood between white and Cherokee sons, Ward says “Let your women’s sons be ours.” In the sentence “your women” are the treaty officers’ mothers, and “your women’s sons” are the treaty officers themselves. When she requests that those “sons be ours,” she is asking the treaty officers to become sons of Cherokee mothers; but she also offers that Cherokee sons are now sons of white mothers by adding “our sons be yours.” Therefore, the men, Cherokee and American, take on the relationship of brothers to each other. Ward uses the sentimental appeals of motherhood and brotherhood, although semiotically different in the two different cultures, to achieve a conciliatory attitude in her white audience. Not only is she their mother, the Cherokee men are their brothers. In a Cherokee way, she has added to her clan by adopting the white men into her Cherokee kinship system. In a white way, she has created a narrative of domesticity in which she plays the role of Republican Mother to them, instilling the virtue of peace within the nation. Certainly, the treaty officers could have dismissed this rhetoric, coming from a woman, as without merit in their public and political arena, but evidence from Ward’s contemporary, Colonel Christian, as well as from early twentieth-century historian, Samuel Cole Williams, confirm that Ward’s words hit their mark and had their desired effect.

With her parting line Ward reminds her audience that however important they believe themselves to be, they, too, have mothers: “Let your women hear our words.” This statement could seem quaint to her white audience, but it reiterates to the treaty officers the importance of women and of women’s political voice within the Cherokee nation and, therefore, the importance of the opinions of Ward and the other Cherokee women at the treaty meeting. Simply by telling the commissioners to consult with their women, Ward creates her ethos as an authoritative and vital force in the negotiations. Interestingly, she also invites in the silent, white women’s voice. Is this successful? How does her invocation of American mothers open up space for her own words to be better received? As mentioned, the success of Ward’s appeal becomes apparent through Colonel Christian’s reply to it. Christian responds,

Mothers: We have listened well to your talk; it is humane...No man can hear it without being moved by it. Such words and thoughts show the world that human nature is the same everywhere. Our women shall hear your words, and we know how they will feel and think of them. We are all descendants of the same woman. We will not quarrel with you, because you are our mothers. We will not meddle with your people if they will be still and quiet at home and let us live in peace. (qtd. in Williams 201)

Some moments in his response require particular attention. Christian says “human nature is the same everywhere.” In an era in which Indians were thought by many to be scientifically less human than Euro-Americans, Christian expresses a rather radical idea—that Indians and white men possess the same, *human*, nature. Additionally, he tells Ward “We will not meddle with your people if they will be still”; by assigning

“ownership” grammatically of the people to Ward by using the second person possessive “your,” Christian recognizes the power of the Cherokee women, Ward specifically, within their own nation.

In Ward’s words and in Christian’s response, the reference to land is buried in requests for peace. Ward asserts to the treaty commissioners “Our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever.” Christian replies, “We will not meddle with your people if they will be still and quiet at home and let us live in peace.” The cause of war between the two nations is land rights. The Cherokee sided with the British in the Revolutionary War in the hopes of shoring up national boundaries, and after winning the war the Americans responded to the Cherokee’s actions by taking more Cherokee land. Ward declares that the Cherokee are asking for peace to be established and continue forever, but for that to occur both parties know that illegal encroachment on Cherokee land by American settlers must cease. This makes Christian’s reply a bit ironic. He requests that Cherokees “be still and quiet at home and let us live in peace,” but it is, of course, the restlessness of *his* citizens that has caused the problem and will continue to cause problems until the Cherokee are driven out, almost entirely, from their homeland in 1836-1838. But, in 1781, especially to Ward and the other women leaders in the Cherokee nation, forced removal was unthinkable and her transrhetorical plea aids the Cherokee in retaining as much of their homeland as possible.

In 1785 Ward spoke again to treaty commissioners. As in 1781, Ward equates lasting peace with the end of the white land grab, but to successfully deliver her message she must upend the racial and gender hierarchy again and remind the white men of her



validity as authoritative spokesperson. She starts her 1785 speech with, “I am fond of hearing that there is peace, and I hope you have now taken us by the hand in real friendship” (Ward 28). The power that she assumes with the Cherokee culture becomes a power that she asserts when she speaks to an audience of Euro-American men. Rather than use the paternalistic terms that one often hears in U.S.-Native relations, referring to the treaty commissioners as older brothers or to the U.S. president as “the great father,” she posits a balanced relationship. Using a metonymic device, “you have now taken us by the hand,” Ward creates a side-by-side image, an envisioned equality between America and the Cherokee nation. She follows that phrase with “in real friendship” to foster a feeling of camaraderie. She extends that friendly equality expressed to the treaty commissioners with “I look on you and the red people as my children.” Using this statement provides her, again, with a position of power by asserting her status of mother over all of the men present: a Republican Mother to whites and a culturally powerful Cherokee mother to her own people.

The affirmation of her mother status leads eventually to her declaration of land rights. However, to linger a moment with her creation of a viable persona, she shores up her ethos by reminding listeners of her experience and her position as elder; she says, “I have seen much trouble during the late war. I am old” (Ward 28). Importantly, though, she continues, “but I hope yet to bear children” (Ward 28). This is interesting because at the time of her speech Ward would have been approximately 43 years old and may have already experienced menopause. What, rhetorically, could be the reason she would want her audience to think that she was still within the window of motherhood? There are two

possibilities, both dealing with the development of her ethos. In the Cherokee culture, where blood signified power, a War Woman like Ward “possessed extraordinary power: through war and menstruation she had male and female contact with blood”: “Each experience singly was a source of power and danger; when the two came together, the power was phenomenal and permitted these [War] women to move between the worlds of men and women” (Perdue *Cherokee Women* 39). Whether the treaty commissioners understood it or not, Ward could have been saying that she had not yet experienced menopause and so was still a doubly dangerous woman—one that they better respect and hear. A second possible answer lies in the next part of the phrase; she says she hopes to bear children, “who will grow up and people our nation.” She has created herself as a sort of *uber*-mother, the mother over all the future Cherokee, and, possibly by her use of the word “our” in front of nation, the mother of all whites as well.

In a move that parallels American notions of Republican Motherhood with Cherokee constructs of matrilineality, Ward ends her statement with “The talk I have given, is from the young warriors I have raised in my town as well as myself.” Ward intimates that she has instilled Cherokee virtues in her young warriors. Therefore, if her white audience doubts the force behind her rhetoric, she invokes the “young *warriors*,” choosing the word “warriors” for its male and warring properties, which would be readily recognized and respected by the treaty officers. Again by creating her persona in ways that serve both the white and the Cherokee rhetorical spheres, she transrhetorically carves out a space for herself in the Euro-American political arena by using her Cherokee female self and adopting what she knows of prescribed, white, female social constructs. Much

of her speech is given over to developing her ethos so that she can then use it to deliver her message to an audience not likely, initially, to consider the political words of a woman. Ward references the future by invoking the unborn children who will “people *our* nation” and with this summons up the shared social role of motherhood; however, whereas in Cherokee mother equally balances warrior, in America motherhood is a domestic state in which public displays of power are deferred to husbands and sons. That both similar and vastly different status of motherhood segues into a clear and almost threatening statement from Ward: “we are now under the protection of Congress, and shall have no more disturbance.” The threat comes not only in the finality of the phrase we “shall have no more disturbance,” but also from the follow-up reminder to treaty officers that she is backed by “the young warriors I have raised in my town.” “Raised,” yes, as a mother raises its young, but Ward could also be suggesting “raised” as one raises an army. Thus the passage reads, we shall have no more disturbance from you, and I have an army of young warriors who will back my rhetoric with their force.

A few other texts exist to which we can attach Ward as author or co-author. Thirty-two years after her speeches to treaty officers, Ward and other Cherokee women presented a petition to the Cherokee National Council on May 2, 1817. She would have been, at that time, approximately 75 years old. During those interim years, the Cherokee fought constantly but unsuccessfully to keep Americans off of their land. The result was treaty after treaty in which the Cherokee tried to draw hard boundary lines. From the earliest treaty with South Carolina in 1722 to the final blow dealt by the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, individual states or the federal government forced the Cherokee into 22

treaties. All of them ceded land to either one particular state or to the United States.<sup>16</sup>

The Treaty of New Echota resulted in the loss of all remaining land east of the Mississippi except for a small portion held by a group of Cherokee who found means to stay (Smoot and Reeves, “Cherokee Land Cession”).<sup>17</sup>

The United States went through unprecedented, rapid expansion in the decades between 1810 and 1830. Perdue writes, “[T]he older states of Ohio, Tennessee, and Georgia, all with land within their borders that belonged to Indians, filled up. Their populations rose from 745,000 in 1810 to over two million in 1830” (*Cherokee Removal* 15). This “enormous growth...vastly increased the pressure on the tribes to sell more land”; the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees, in particular, felt that pressure (Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 15). Many Native nations, however, refused, stating that they had sold enough and needed all that they had left for their continued livelihood. Since Thomas Jefferson first suggested it in 1803, the U.S. government considered removal of the Indians to tracts of land across the Mississippi as a viable option. From 1810 to 1830, the government encouraged removal through discussion and coercion. Andrew Jackson, however, did not shy from using force. Perdue writes that Jackson believed negotiations with Indians to be ““absurd”” and argued that the United States should ““legislate their boundaries”” and “seize the millions of acres [the Indians] ‘wandered’” (qtd. in Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 16). Jackson, then Major General of U.S. forces, negotiated the treaty of 1817 with the Cherokee; Ward fought against this treaty, which encouraged removal.<sup>18</sup>

By 1817 the frustration caused by illegal white settlements on tribal land led some in the Cherokee nation to opt for the “voluntary” removal proffered by the treaty. These often well-to-do Cherokee, including some mixed-bloods, believed that if they removed from areas of dense, white, settlement, they could live the lives they chose without fear of harassment. The choice to move, however, meant ceding land belonging to the Cherokee nation in trade for land in Arkansas and money for individual improvements. As the nation still existed in a state of communal landholding, cession of land meant a splintering off of part of the Cherokee nation. Ward and the Cherokee women denounced this at the Cherokee National Council, calling into play once again traditional gender roles and the respect merited by Cherokee mothers. An excerpt of the petition includes the following: “The Cherokee Ladys now being present at the meeting of the chiefs and warriors in council have thought it their duty as mothers to address their beloved chiefs and warriors now assembled” (Ward 29; qtd. in Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 124). Specifically by addressing the men as warriors and referring to themselves as mothers, the women again access equality via the power balance: blood shed in childbirth and blood shed in battle.

In contrast to the embedded reference to land in her previous rhetoric, Ward addresses land issues outright this speech, and perhaps the difference lies in the dynamic between speaker(s) and audience. In 1781 and 1785, Ward is one woman addressing white treaty officers, whereas in the 1817 petition, she is one of many women addressing the Cherokee Council. A situational difference exists as well: in the 1700s speeches she attempted to stop the federal government from taking land, whereas in 1817 Ward is

trying to stop members of the Cherokee nation from choosing to cede land. The rhetorical tightrope Ward had to walk in 1781 and 1785 was created by multiple variables, the most obvious and significant being gender and race. In 1817, Ward and the Cherokee women could presumably express their sentiments with more freedom and could speak from a position of greater power. However, because of the influence and pressure from Euro-American culture the power of Cherokee women may have been waning. Just a short ten years after Ward's speech, the Cherokee Council of 1827, in an attempt to appear more "civilized" to their white neighbors and by so doing stave off talk of removal, disenfranchised its women, taking away from them the right to vote or hold office (Johnston 54). Still, in the 1817 petition, Cherokee women use strong rhetoric and more explicit entreaties for land retention, which interestingly draw on all three classic Western appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—but rest on the Cherokee national narrative of kinship and community. Again invoking a balance of power, mothers and warriors, the petition states: "Our beloved children and head men of the Cherokee Nation, we address you as warriors in council" and continues, "We have raised all of you on the land which we now have, which God gave us to inhabit and raise provisions" (Ward 29). In this portion, using the phrase "we have raised all of you" the women create their ethos and connect their source of power, motherhood, to the thing that they are speaking to protect, "the land which we now have," in both an emotional and logical appeal. The emotion stems from their assumption that the Cherokee men will respect their status as mothers, and the logic originates from the fact that the land is at that moment in their possession. They aim to keep both respect and land.

The women state, “We know that our country has once been extensive, but by repeated sales has become circumscribed to a small track, and [we] never have thought it our duty to interfere in the disposition of it till now” (Ward 29). Again, there is a pairing of logos and ethos; the statement both accuses and defers. The men are responsible for “repeated sales,” which have reduced the nation “to a small track,” and the women have not “interfere[d] in the disposition of it.” This back and forth sets up the next statement, an outright judgment of what those who propose voluntary removal are choosing to do: “If a father or mother was to sell all their lands which they had to depend on, which their children had to raise their living on, [it] would be indeed bad & [so it would be] to be removed to another country” (Ward 29). Ward and the women express this desire to remain at a time when women still held significant power, when clan and kinship roles were still in place, when “mother” as Theda Perdue tells us was still a social construct that meant all women of a certain age cohort functioning as mother to many children, and when the Cherokee nation still held land communally (41-49). In other words, the women connect communal connotations to the words “mother,” “land,” and “children” in this passage.

Additionally interesting is the inclusion of “father” in the passage. In Cherokee culture, women were the keepers of the land, the ones who produced and controlled the products of the land. But in the negotiations with Europeans and then Americans, men, “fathers,” sold and ceded land. The inclusion of “fathers” reflects the reality of the times and the changing culture of the Cherokee nation: women controlled the land, but when it came to creating terms for land deals, when it came to accepting, rejecting, or ratifying

treaties, according to Euro-Americans that was men's work. And, so, Cherokee men assumed a relationship to land different than that of women. Whereas women cultivated the land and controlled it through the social construct of matrilocality, the U.S. government placed men in ownership positions when the two nations negotiated. Women had to assert their voices in tribal council in order to retake the rhetoric of land management. In this passage from Ward, they clearly did.

The women end this paragraph in the petition with the following: "We do not wish to go to an unknown country which we have understood some of our children wish to go [to] over the Mississippi, but this act of our children would be like destroying your mothers" (Ward 29; qtd. in Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 124). Here the connection between motherhood and land is explicit: selling land equals "destroying your mothers." The appeal appears, from a perspective outside of Cherokee society, to be an emotional one, invoking the Western domestic narrative of motherhood. While that may be an element, from a Cherokee perspective it is both an ethical and logical appeal. After delineating the ethics of motherhood and relating it to the equal power of being a warrior, and defending their interfering as a "duty" earlier in the petition, here the women connect themselves, their power, and thereby the survival of the Cherokee nation directly to the land. The precedent here comes from one of the oldest and most basic of origin stories, that of Selu and Kana'ti. As previously stated, the blood of Selu's body becomes corn, the crop that sustains the Cherokee. Women and land are one; both have the power to create and sustain life. Selling Cherokee land, and relocating to areas west, literally, "would be like destroying your mothers." To abandon the land, the thing that generates



all that the people need to survive, is the same as destroying the mothers, the ones who generate life. Using transrhetorical elements that crossed gender and culture barriers, Nancy Ward and the Cherokee women made certain that their men remembered what both women and land meant for the survival of their nation.

*“I am telling you what she said”: Narcissa Owen and the Ownership of Cherokee History*

In Ward’s petition to the Cherokee, she spoke against the desires of the group who came to be known as the “Old Settlers”; those who traded land for land in 1817 and 1819 and resettled in Arkansas. Included in that group was John D. Chisholm, grandfather of Narcissa Owen. Nancy Ward died in 1822, before Andrew Jackson defied the Supreme Court,<sup>19</sup> before Jackson decided to, as Narcissa Owen explains it in her memoir, sacrifice the Cherokees and compel them to move from their vast land holdings that at one time included portions of North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia and go west to a tract of land in Indian Territory. In the battle over eastern lands, Owen writes, “Jackson had little love, I think, for the Cherokees, and was willing to take the side of the Georgians” (75) who clamored loudly for farmland on what was then Cherokee territory. Owen was separated from the direct consequences of forced removal by both time and distance because her family had removed before 1836 when the others were forced out and because she was a young child when the Cherokee nation experienced the brutal process. Still, deeply affected by stories of the death or displacement of 16,000 Cherokees, Owen does not hesitate to condemn the U.S. government and present an indigenous history to counter the tragic-

romantic “Trail of Tears” national narrative that sprang up soon after 1836. Counter to what was being written in history texts, Owen derived her retelling predominantly from the oral histories of women.

In order to create a rhetorical space for her Cherokee, female voice, I argue that Owen creates an authoritative ethos by consciously choosing Indian memoir as her genre, creating, claiming, and putting to use the exoticism ascribed to her by her audience(s). But along with her identity as a Cherokee, Owen also embraces the life of an upper-middle-class, American woman, wife to a prestigious business man, mother to a doctor and a politician. Having been brought up during the era of the True Woman, she uses those constructs to make herself acceptable and legible to a non-Cherokee audience by employing the tropes of domesticity. However, she claims the cultural power of her status as a Cherokee woman and employs it to give precedence to indigenous, oral storytelling over masculine, Euro-American, written history. She uses her transrhetorical persona to reshape, at times rewrite, and, finally, to re-present Cherokee-American history to Native, non-Native, and mixed-blood audiences of her contemporaries and to the audience she envisions reading her words in the future.

As Steve Brandon and Karen Kilcup have suggested, Owen addresses an audience far larger than the “children” and “Cherokee” stated in the dedication that begins her text. Using memoir, she finds ways to enter her voice into male-authored versions of Cherokee history while at the same time remaining acceptably feminine. She retains acceptable femininity by returning, within each historical illustration, to discussing ways in which the political affects the domestic. Owen creates her own authoritative ethos for male and

female audiences and for Cherokee and non-Native audiences by writing transrhetorically. She validates her writing by citing white male historians as sources, but only as occasional corroboration of her ultimate source, oral histories handed down primarily by Native women. She deals in numbers and dates, but only as those facts serve her feminine rhetoric. She writes history for her readers—Americans of her day and of the future—but her account does not render Cherokee people invisible, specifically not Cherokee women. She says in her introduction that she produces her memoir only for family and friends for their edification and enjoyment, and she nestles her history deceptively within the genre of memoir rather than claiming it to be a historical text; however, evidence embedded in her writing points toward a larger audience and a more public goal. Like her predecessor Nancy Ward, Owen, uses her transrhetorical ability to openly protest illegal seizure of land by the United States from the Cherokee.

Owen goes to great lengths to cite her sources and thus create an authoritative ethos, which will in turn earn her the clout she needs to effectively re-present history. Unlike Nancy Ward, who is able to establish her ethos based on Cherokee notions of female power and her elevated status of War Woman, Owen, a highly acculturated, mixed-blood woman writing almost 100 years later more easily conforms to Western notions of womanhood. Owen, especially if she envisions her voice carrying weight within the domain of written history texts, must create a reliable authorial self through her use of valid sources. Those sources, like her, are a mix: they consist of written, white-authored history but rest more solidly on Native-told, oral, family history (which she then

writes down). For a complete listing of her sources as she cites them in her memoir, see the Appendix.

At the beginning of her memoir, Owen takes pains to validate herself as one who has the authority and the responsibility to tell the history of the Cherokee. She writes,

And NOW, in compliance With the oft-repeated request of the various members of my family, I write for them some of the stories and traditions of the dim past as taught by the elderly Cherokee women, whose duty it was to instruct the rising generation and keep it informed who the rightful hereditary rulers of the various clans should be, as well as to teach them the traditions and the past history of the seven Cherokee clans, of whom the eldest son of the ‘Arni Ki-law-hi’ clan are always to be the principal chief. (46)

Some moments in her sentence establish her authority specifically for a Cherokee audience. For example, she defers to her ancestors: the stories are not hers but instead come from the “elderly Cherokee women.” And, she states that the Cherokee traditionally required women to tell the stories. This works two ways for her, rhetorically. She gains authority because of her cultural knowledge, and she becomes that Cherokee elder whose duty is to impart the history of the nation. However, her audience is not simply traditional Cherokees; more likely, her audience consisted of mixed-blood, acculturated Cherokees within and outside of her family and non-Cherokees. Those not of Indian ancestry could have consisted of those who had married into<sup>20</sup> the family or the nation and those curious outsiders who, when the book left the confines of family and friends, might have romantically considered her words bits of Cherokee wisdom set down on paper before that noble race “vanished.”

The second part of Owen's opening sentence, suggests an audience unfamiliar with what Owen presents as basic Cherokee cultural information, most probably a white or a mixed-blood audience. Owen needs to explain that elderly Cherokee women had the duty of instructing the next generation, and she follows with a history of the clans and information on how leaders ascend to power (47).<sup>21</sup> Why would she need to explain this to a Cherokee audience? Unless they had become far removed from their culture—which may have been the case—she wouldn't. Explaining these ethnographic moments in her authoritative tone and from her position as a Cherokee female elder fulfilling her traditional duty quickly builds her ethos, in this instance for the non-Native audience.

Owen adds to her authority as female elder by specifically citing and in various ways validating her informants. Additionally, she makes herself credible to multiple audiences by using both Cherokee oral histories and published, white-authored, historical texts. Cherokee oral storytelling sources include "elderly Cherokee women"; "Granny Jenny"; her step-father, Judge William Wilson; his mother, Ruth Drumgould, and his grandmother Kah-ta-yah or "Old Mrs. Drumgould." Her non-Native sources include "the histories in the Congressional Library," "*Ramsey's History of Tennessee*," and "Mr. Mooney"; that is, James Mooney who wrote *Myths of the Cherokee* in 1897-1898. The vagueness of the reference to "elderly Cherokee women" absolves Owen from the need to authenticate them; however, the more specific references require explanations.

A justification of Granny Jenny as source provides the opportunity also to trace some of Owen's own Cherokee roots. Owen describes Granny Jenny as "the daughter of native Africans" and says she lived to be 116 years old. According to Owen's memoir,

John Beamor, who was Owen's great-great-grandfather and who was married to a Cherokee woman Owen calls "Queen Quatsis," bought Granny Jenny and gave her to their daughter Peggy Beamor. Peggy married Colonel Thomas Holmes, and they gave Granny Jenny to their daughter, Martha Holmes. Martha, who was by blood one quarter Cherokee, married John D. Chisholm, a Scotsman who had immigrated to America sometime before 1789 when the two married. Here, historical context and knowledge of Cherokee marriage customs provide a deeper cultural understanding. It was John D. Chisholm who, with a number of other Cherokee men, signed the treaty of 1817, relinquishing his right to Cherokee land in return for a settlement in what is present-day Arkansas. His name appears under the heading "Arkansas Chiefs" near the end of the 1817 treaty document. Because he signed the treaty as a Cherokee we can discern a few things about him and about the family. Though born a Scot, Chisholm must have conformed to traditional Cherokee matrilocality, moving onto the land and into the home of his wife, Martha Holmes. And, from that we can assume that although ancestors John Beamor and Thomas Holmes were white men, the family lived at least in some part according to Cherokee cultural paradigms, adhering to matrilocal and matrilineal social constructs.

Granny Jenny became nurse to Martha Holmes's and John D. Chisholm's son Thomas Chisholm, Narcissa Owen's biological father. Thomas Chisholm died in 1834, when Owen was just three years old. Her sister Jane, however, was thirteen at the time of his death, and so knew both her father and Granny Jenny much longer than Owen. Owen cites this connection as justification for the information gleaned from her father's

nursemaid. Owen writes “through Granny Jenny, my sister Jane was taught the personal history of three generations of the Cherokee kin of my father, and my sister...made it her duty to instruct me in turn” (47). This secures the authenticity of the source via oral storytelling, but for those in her audience inclined to believe more readily in the written word Owen adds, “and I, fearing to trust my memory, kept written notes of these stories of Cherokee family history. Through my long life I have kept these stories, and now take pleasure in writing them for my people” (47).

Other sources for Owen are her step-father Judge William Wilson, his mother Ruth Drumgould, and her mother Kah-ta-yah. According to Owen, Wilson was the son of Ruth; Ruth was the eldest daughter of a (presumably white) man named Alexander Drumgould and a three-quarters Cherokee woman, Kah-ta-yah; Kah-ta-yah was the daughter of a Cherokee man named Cau-lun-na, or The Raven, and a half-white woman named Nancy. She both traces the source of the information for her readers and verifies the Cherokee origins of it. And again, Owen assures her audience that, although these stories are handed down orally through the family, they come from both oral and written sources. This implies an audience disposed to value the accuracy of the written word as well as or more than the oral: that is, a Euro-American or at least Euro-American acculturated audience. Reflecting both the oral narration and the written history, she writes, “Judge William Wilson...was my step-father. He took careful notes of the narrations of his grandmother, and of all the stories and traditions as given by her” (47). To add further credibility to her source, Owen mentions seeing Kah-ta-yah, and notes “At that time [she] must have been approaching 100 years old” (47). Later in the memoir, she

cites, “Old Mrs. Drumgould, who was the youngest daughter of Caulunna”; following the intricate details of Owen’s ancestry reveals that “Old Mrs. Drumgould” is Kah-ta-yah. Rather than tell the story (in this particular instance, a story about a number of Cherokee men who accompanied Sir Alexander Cummings to England) as if it were her own, Owen assigns credit to Kah-ta-yah, asserting, “I am telling you what *she* said (65). Owen implies that there has been no alteration; the words come straight from a Cherokee elder, through her, to us via the memoir. Her trust in relating the oral history privileges the verbal as much as or more than the written. Though Owen writes them, the stories’ veracity is derived from the fact that they are oral stories handed down by reliable sources.

Owen’s painstaking delineation of the origin of the stories through her own familial connections works to validate her ethos as a Cherokee woman, but does so mostly for a culturally non-Cherokee audience. As has been noted, the Cherokee trace lineage through the mother. Clan membership is derived from the mother’s clan. Traditionally, a person born to a non-Cherokee mother, even if the father is a full-blood Cherokee, is not considered Cherokee by those in the Cherokee nation. According to American laws, however, membership in the nation is determined by blood quantum, a result of the desire to list all members of a Native nation on tribal rolls for purposes of land allotment during the Dawes Act era. Technically, for traditional Cherokee, Owen would not have been a member of the “Arni-ki-law-hi” (Longhair) clan because her bond comes from her father, not her mother. Things had changed greatly by the time she wrote her memoir, however, and many more people accepted the idea that Indian identity could



be established no matter which parent provided the blood connection. Therefore, employing multiple blood and cultural connections, Owen takes pains to establish her identity as a Cherokee woman.

As previously mentioned, along with her family stories from, “the women historians mentioned at the beginning of this book,” Owen uses “the histories in the Congressional Library,” “*Ramsey’s History of Tennessee*,” and James Mooney’s *Myths of the Cherokee*. Owen does on occasion use their accounts to supplement her own oral histories, but more importantly, she critiques the white male authored histories in order to create rhetorical space for her re-presentation of historical facts. The following are the white-authored histories with which she takes exception. First, she critiques “*The Century Magazine* (No. 5, 1883)” page 706 as compared with page 744. She points out that the latter page shows a prominent Cherokee man, Oota-cite, in proper English dress, while the former “makes another reference to the Cherokees” (specifically her possible ancestor Oconostota) “in the usual absurd style...a very savage dress” (53). Her disdain for their inaccuracy is palpable. In critiquing the respected magazine, she elevates herself as historian, further validating her presentation of the facts. Next, she states that the “American historians” and a certain “illustrated history” give an account of Oconostota “as a naked savage” and “speaks of his warfare as treachery” (69). “The truth is,” says Owen, “he was brought up as a Christian gentleman by an English father, and his efforts for peace prove conclusively his character” (69). Having already defined herself as more accurate than the authors of previously written texts, Owen can get away with the

statement, “The truth is.” “Truth,” she tells us without telling us, resides with her, a Cherokee female elder, reciting story upon story handed down in like manner.

Finally, she critiques an “1821 letter of an Osage missionary” telling the “Osage side of the story about the ‘Claremore Massacre’” (75); the letter portrays the Cherokees as rejecting offers of peace and furiously killing their Osage foes. Owen then relates a contradictory story told to her by her mother about rightful revenge by the Cherokee on the Osage horse thieves; the story ends with “the Cherokee couldn’t help admiring the bravery of the Osage”—still giving the Cherokee credit for a victory, but giving a very different flavor to, if not a whole different reading of, that particular historical battle. Instead of Cherokees “furiously killing” Osages, Owen depicts them as honorable victors who respected their adversaries. Using the power of female oral storytelling and having already undermined white-authored historical texts, Owen manipulates her audience into trusting in her authority and into believing her truth to be the right one.

Owen needs her version of historical truth to become part of the official record because she needs a larger audience to acknowledge that land loss led to loss of family connections, which led ultimately to an almost deadly assault on culture. Her respected historical voice becomes a tool for a continued retaining of and recovery of all three: land, family, and culture. Land loss does equal loss of family and subsequently culture for many Native nations, as witnessed after Andrew Jackson’s forced removal of the Cherokee. The attack on family and culture through loss of land perfectly creates the opportunity to employ sentimental rhetoric as a weapon against that loss. Narcissa Owen

is quick to employ her authoritative, transrhetorical ethos to wield the weapon of sentimentality.

In one of the most moving passages in her memoir, Owen writes about the members of the Old Cherokee nation in the midst of forced removal: “The transportation of those people to the west was the most cruel piece of business you can imagine....[F]amilies were often separated so far that they never met again. (75) *They never met again.* Forced removal and genocide have been romanticized by the label “Trail of Tears,” but it must be seen for what it was and for the reverberations it continued and continues to have for the Cherokee nation. Owen’s version of history forces this. She tells of mothers who died without seeing their children, husbands who died without ever finding their wives. Owen taps into this emotional pain, turning it into a rhetorical weapon, using the discourse of sentimentalism.

Some women, Owen and Ward among them, used words to protest land loss, to hold on to family, and to retain culture. Simply using personal experience and community stories in their speeches, articles, and books was not enough to inform a perhaps skeptical, generally non-Native public that was likely predisposed to mistrust both female and non-white authors. For a text to have force, it had to have both emotional impact and historical validity. Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross, during a visit to Washington, D.C., reportedly said that Indians “found themselves ‘fugitives, vagrants and strangers in [their] own country’” (qtd. in Wilson 167). Native Americans became strangers in America, but worse became citizens in a sort of Orwellian America, long before Orwell would conceive it, subject to a government that rewrote the rules—

rewrote history, like Winston rewriting historical records at the Ministry of Truth—to justify all sorts of evils that fulfilled the needs (mostly for land) of the state. I believe Owen recognized and responded to this. With one foot in and one foot outside the U.S. government (one of her sons, Robert Latham Owen, was a U.S. senator) Owen shows in her memoir that she recognized a disparity between conventionally accepted history and history handed down to her mainly by female, Cherokee, family “historians.” Owen saw the need to piece together a mosaic, to repackage and at times rewrite history in order to create a picture different than what her audience had previously believed to be true.

Owen’s narrative was initially privately published and distributed to a small audience of family and friends. In her dedication; she bestows the book to “my children and the Cherokee.” The book is, she says, the “traditions of Caulunna, Queen Quatsis, Oconostota” and, additionally, is her “memories of an eventful life.” But then she switches to second person “you”: “I give *you* some stories of my Indian ancestors” and also “this record of the past I have faithfully...made an effort to keep, so that...I may be a living presence with *you and yours* as well as with my clan, the Arni ki-law-hi” (45 emphasis added). If they are not her “clan,” who are the “you and yours” Owen is directing this to? As a political woman and a woman living with a certain amount of social prestige, she may have envisioned that her status would lead to her memoir being read by more than just her friends and family. I have suggested already in this chapter that Owen writes for a wider audience of her contemporaries. Grammatically, she could be using the “you and yours” to refer to her children and the Cherokee; the “you” in “I give you some stories of my Indian ancestors” could easily be construed that way. But

why, in the second “you and yours” instance does she add “as well as with my clan”?

Her clan would be a subset of the Cherokee and her family a subset of the clan. The grammatical feel of the passage is that she envisions a larger audience, an audience that includes non-Native readers. Other passages in the memoir speak to this as well.

Karen Kilcup, who edited the most recent edition of Owen’s memoirs, suggests that there is evidence to show she also writes for a future audience. The last portion of the dedication speaks to that idea. Owen writes, “so that I may be a living presence,” and the unwritten phrase in that sentence is “after I am gone.” Owen states that she writes for her clan, and at times in her memoir “for my people” but, as Kilcup has argued, Owen takes pains to establish all of America as “her people.” Owen’s desire to remain, through writing, a living presence for the “you and yours” in her dedication is her desire for herself and her oral history handed down by her ancestors to be present, through her writing, for future generations of Americans. Have no doubt about it; she wants her version in the mix.

If Owen can be viewed as envisioning a wider audience, in her time and in the future, and as creating an ethos as a more accurate and authentic, Cherokee elder fulfilling her traditional obligation by relating history, then certain passages, specifically from the section “The First Migration to the Indian Territory,” take on important layers of rhetorical meaning that speak to her message about the loss of land. She begins the “First Migration” section with “In the early years of 1800 the hereditary rulers of the Cherokees, realizing that they were not to be permitted to continue their old form of government, began to consider how they might save themselves and their own self-

government from the encroachments of the whites” (71). Although she writes in third person, she writes from a somewhat behind-the-scenes position, as if she is in the know about what the Cherokee chiefs were discussing in council meetings. Because of the authoritative ethos she has established, her audience may more readily accept her insider position and believe her presentation of the facts. From this position, she can begin to represent Cherokee history to her wider audience by choosing which facts to deliver and how to deliver them, and she can continually return to the issue of land.

She titles chapter two of her memoir “Cherokees Visit England—Ocono-Stota—Conflict with Georgia—Removal to West”: a list of historical events, interspersed with one historically important Cherokee ancestor (Ocono-Stota, who she names as her great-uncle). Immediately, she begins to mix hard facts, like historical dates and names, with sentimental, family stories, adding her own gloss along the way. She tells how the women, who had planned to sail with Caulunna and his sons Oconostota and Ootacite to England to sign a treaty, balk at the last possible minute, fearful of the “great waves of the Atlantic” (63). The women are not “satisfied to feed the great fish of the deep with their bodies” (63). Describing the women after the men leave, Owen takes on a sentimental voice; she writes “like a funeral cortege, they turned their faces homeward, to abide, near the sacred mounds of their departed ancestors till the return of the grand chief” (64). This mix of what is acceptably female, the sentimental domesticity of women mourning the departure of their husbands and sons, makes her legible and acceptable, in the sense of True Womanhood, as a woman writer. But her status as a

Cherokee helps create the rhetorical space in which she can become a participant in the political sphere.

Her tone switches back to authoritative historian when she reports on the actions of the men. They do sail, arrive safely, and are reportedly honored as kings and princes during their stay. She reverts back to hard facts to shore up her authority, stating “Finally September 7, 1730, came, when the treaty was concluded and signed” (64). Using this mix of emotions combined with facts she puts herself into a position to critique what she regards as a false and romanticized historical version of events. She writes, “The story about the war bonnet in the care of Sir Alexander Cummings, which is reported as having been presented as the crown of the king of the Cherokees, is probably merely a romantic story of Sir Alexander Cummings or the reporters of that day” (64). Having created doubt about that historical fact, she throws her own gloss on a much more politically charged event, writing

The statement of the chiefs all kneeling at the same time, as a testimony of their submission to the King, and giving their approbation to the act of Sir Alexander Cumming in presenting the above-mentioned war bonnet as the crown, etc., was probably another bit of romance to entertain the public, and unjust to Caulunna and Oconostota, who were kindly disposed toward the English. (64-65)

Owen’s reshaping, rewriting, and re-presenting of this history changes, or, rather, eliminates, a here-to-for perceived hierarchy. In her version, there is no possibility that Caulunna and Oconostota, who understood English well enough to know what was going on, would agree to place themselves below the English, not even below the King of

England. Her casual, they “were kindly disposed to the English” at the end is like a grammatical pat on the head; with her sarcastic tone she reverses the paternalism in written accounts most often directed from Euro-Americans toward Indians.

Owen throws more doubt on the existing version of history and gives herself more credibility by pointing out that “‘Scayagusta’ was not the name of a man, as mentioned in that treaty, but a title of someone present,” and she says “The other names mentioned in that report are not spelled so as to show them to be names of any Cherokee” (65). Here she opens up a space for herself so that she can, on the next page of her memoir, present and critique the treaty negotiated by those who went to England, one that she says, “seems to have been made entirely for the English, without any corresponding benefit to the Indians” (65). She can also evaluate the pretended friendship of the English, writing that the Cherokee “never dreamed of...horrors that would come to them for that very trusting friendship” (65). After these critiques, she reminds readers of her own reliability by validating her source:

Old Mrs. Drumgould, who was the youngest daughter of Caulunna, lived to extreme old age, and I am telling what she said about this journey and about who went there with Sir Alexander Cummings. I am quite sure that I am correct in this statement. She said that the wife of Caulunna, her mother, and a number of the other wives of the men who were going, went to Charleston to go with them, but when they saw the great waves rolling into the harbor they were terribly afraid and refused to go, but the old lady enumerated the number of persons who went. (65)

She further confirms her, and now her audience’s, understanding of events, writing, “If there had not been an eyewitness to tell who the persons going on the voyage were, you



would not know anything about them...but through this old lady's narration...I became possessed of the knowledge" (65). And, of course, because she has possession of the knowledge, she has the authority and responsibility to pass it on to her readers.

She finishes with one last swipe at the previously accepted, white male authored version of history: "Certainly the histories I found have been misleading in regard to the above-mentioned journey" (65). In the next few paragraphs she combines moments of historical fact, dates of moves and names of places settled, population numbers, and political structure with family stories about her grandfather's move west and a "strange monster" that turns out to be a river boat. This intertwining of what might be deemed masculine political rhetoric with feminine oral storytelling reiterates her status as both authoritative historian and Cherokee insider; she is a transrhetorical, female storyteller who hands down the truth. This ethos serves her well when she makes her strongest stance, re-presenting the horrors of Cherokee removal.

By the time that Narcissa Owen published her memoir in 1907, the catastrophic event that caused enormous devastation to the Cherokee nation registered merely as a sad but necessary part of America's national narrative. Packaged and presented as the "Trail of Tears," the brutal facts of removal had already been smoothed over and turned into another sentimentalist "masochistic pleasure," a further example of the "Vanishing Indian." Even in the heat of the debate over removal, the popularity the William Penn essays, a series published in the *National Intelligencer* in 1829 denouncing removal, did not move the American public as a whole to imagine a "civilized" Indian (Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 18). Likewise, Americans could not envision the inevitable inhuman

conditions inherent in forcing 16,000 men, women, and children to march over 800 miles from the southeastern United States to the mid-western Indian Territory. Jeremiah Evarts wrote the Penn essays in response to the fear and outrage he felt about the issue of removal. If the United States enacted Indian removal, Evarts believed, “God would punish the United States with disasters and destruction” (Perdue, *Cherokee Removal* 94). Years later, Owen came to that same conclusion.

Evarts writing in the midst of the removal era and Owen writing seventy years after the fact were the exceptions. More American citizens wished to believe in a prettier picture, such as the one Lewis Cass painted in his article “Removal of the Indians” published in the *North American Review* in 1830. He writes of the Cherokee,

[I]f they are anxious to escape from [the laws of the United States] and establish governments for themselves, ample provision has been made for their gratification. A region is open to them, where they and their descendents can be secured in the enjoyment of every privilege which they may be capable of estimating and enjoying. (114)

Cass and others presented removal to the American public as something that “saved” the “Vanishing Indian,” and the brutality of the move could not be a part of that narrative. The glossed over, romanticized account of removal was established in the early 1800s and persists for many to this day. However, Owen makes certain that the individual and communal suffering of displaced Cherokee reemerge as part of the American national narrative.

As mentioned, Narcissa Owen was a descendent of the “Old Settlers”: that faction who Nancy Ward argued against in her petition to the Cherokee Council. Owen’s father, Thomas Chisholm, left the Eastern Cherokee nation in 1819, seventeen years before the Van Buren enforced Jackson’s Indian Removal Act. According to Owen, her father removed from what is now Alabama; she writes, “When it was thought best to move west, he walked out and left everything standing, and his property was taken possession of by the white settlers” (79). As part of the “Old Settlers,” she fared much better than those who waited in the hopes of staying but were, instead, corralled in concentration camps and then transported to Oklahoma in wagons, on rafts and in steamboats, in crowded railroad cars, and on foot. Her family, despite her father walking out and leaving “everything,” did take their slaves with them and became very prosperous, for a time, on their new land. Although her individual family fared well, in her memoir Owen reflects a communal, and decidedly Cherokee, world view when she writes about that dark time in Cherokee and American history.

Before weaving in information about the physical and emotional toll exacted on the Cherokee people because of the United States’ unlawful seizure of their land, Owen lists off offenses by the government that led up to forced removal, fact by historical fact. She cites the Cherokee Constitution, a “written code of laws, modeled according to the friendly suggestion of [Thomas] Jefferson,” but remarks that instead of creating shared respect, the constitution makes the Cherokees “with their independent self-government ... a thorn in the flesh to the people of the State of Georgia” (72-73). And then the United States, “found that it either had to sacrifice the Cherokees or use military force

against the Georgians,” they sided with Georgia. She continues to list other historical moments that result in political negotiations between European and American governments and the Cherokee: a French report from the 1700s estimating 50,000 Cherokee warriors, which inspires English “efforts made to gain Cherokee friendship”; the treaty of 1730, which she has earlier asserted was of no benefit to the Indians; and scourges of smallpox; and the constant encroachment of settlers “until the Cherokees were driven from their native land at the point of the bayonet” (73). These instances provide data that lead her readers to view her people as powerful but badly treated, cheated, and deceived. She uses the descriptions to lead her readers into her account of the worst deception of all, facilitated by the Reverend J. W. Schermerhorn as a representative for the federal government: what she calls the “pretended treaty” of New Echota, December 31, 1835 in which a small number of Cherokee men signed away the entire Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi. She states that those who signed the treaty were induced by promises and that the amount of money offered was a full \$15 million dollars less than what the land was worth. Despite protests and a petition signed by “over 16,000 Cherokee” Owen recounts that “it was nevertheless ratified by the Senate, on the theory that the removal of the Cherokees was the only way to protect them from the violence of Georgia” (73-74). Her use of the words “nevertheless” and “theory” combined with her phrase “the only way” demonstrates the ironic tone she deploys here.

Owen does not simply list the hard facts of removal for her readers. Because she established herself as more competent than white, male historians and proved herself to be both Euro-American lady and a Cherokee female elder, she ably uses her

transrhetorical ethos to echo Evarts and lay blame. Evarts predicted general “disaster and destruction”; Owen specifically attributes the devastation of the Civil War as retribution for the brutal forced removal. She asserts:

Both the North and the South had been parties to the treaties made with the Cherokees, and the South was just as much pledged to those treaties as the North. If Georgia had been made at that time to respect the Federal treaties with the Cherokees, the Confederate war would have never sacrificed its millions of money and men. No wonder God permitted that war. The United States Government and its people, North and South, had need to be taught to see the truth of God’s word, ‘With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.’ Both North and South paid in blood and treasure for the cruelty and inhumanity and bad faith shown to the Cherokees in their removal from Georgia to the present Cherokee country. (74)

Here, she creates an us-them rhetoric that places her on the side of Cherokee people in opposition to the “United States Government and its people, North and South.” Although at times she had depicts herself as a model True Woman, Owen, here, takes on the full power of her Cherokee female status. Like Ward before her, Owen equates the loss of land with the loss of human life. Ward warned the Cherokee people that giving up land would equate to “destroying your mothers” and destroying mothers logically meant destroying the future of the Cherokee nation: in a matrilineal society, no mothers means no children to continue the clans or the nation. Ward’s rhetorical goal was to stop her people from voluntarily ceding land. Owen, however, speaks to a white audience whose sin has already been committed. Instead of warning the Cherokee what will happen, she lays blame on the United States: because the federal government took Cherokee land, both North and South “paid in blood...for the cruelty and inhumanity.” For both women

land is integrally tied to the people; to disturb the connection is to suffer the consequences.

Owen's most impressive re-presentation of history is her depiction of the real human suffering resulting from the United States's forced removal of the Cherokee. Despite the fact that the romantic label "Trail of Tears" came into fashion almost immediately after removal occurred, Owen never uses it. Nothing in her rhetoric romanticizes, despite her evocation of emotion via domesticity. She gives a straightforward account that we might again consider in more detail:

The transportation of those people to the west was the most cruel piece of business you can imagine. The people were all running around from house to house, telling the news to each other, about how they were going to be picked up and taken by force and carried away, and the soldiers were ordered to capture them anywhere they found them, and take them to the camps, where they were concentrated. A wife might be taken to one of those places, a husband to another, and the children to a third, making the most cruel separation of families; and, as the detachments did not all go together, families were often separated so far that they never met again. (75)

Her word choices are simple and factual rather than flowery. Having established herself as a credible historian, she can let the events speak for themselves. Although she uses the descriptor "cruel," she calls removal a "piece of business." By removing the emotion here, she actually evokes it even more readily for her audience. Just as she listed off the facts leading up to this moment, she lists off the events as they occurred, making her audience feel as if Owen herself experienced it, which then allows her audience to experience it as well.

To bring her audience into the pain and suffering of the displaced Cherokees, Owen employs increasingly intimate language. “The people,” early in the passage become the more familiar “each other” and then become the familial “wife,” “husband,” and “children.” The final line in the passage is devastating in its simple delivery. In this one sentence, Owen deftly combines her masculine historian persona with her ethos as sentimental storyteller to create a moment in which her readers should feel profoundly disturbed. In an almost off-hand manner she states, “the detachments did not all go together”; the shocking result of this bit of logistics is that “families were often separated so far that they never met again.” I have already emphasized the devastation inherent in that statement, “They never met again,” but it bears repeating. The domestic ideal, the role of the True Woman, the happy ending to any good sentimental novel is lost forever in the declaration of that sentence. For those family members who lost each other, Ward’s prediction from almost a century before comes true: moving west of the Mississippi destroys the family and so weakens the nation.

Owen leaves readers with one final chilling image, bringing into grammatical proximity motherhood, land, displacement and death. She writes that one detachment of Cherokees stopped “on my mother’s homestead” midway through their long journey from their homeland to the land reserved for them in Indian Territory. She describes them as “transplanted from a warm climate, and having to live in open tents in January” (75). “Suffer[ing] the blizzards of that country in the winter,” Owen shares, “they died in hosts” (75). Having drawn the picture of removal in much bolder and more painful strokes, she creates a final image for her readers of “between fifty and a hundred

[Cherokee] buried in my father's graveyard" (75). The desolation is complete, in this moment at least. But the resurgence is the story that Owen now has told. Like Nancy Ward, Owen used her female, Cherokee self to speak out against land theft, in Owen's case by making certain that her version of the devastation is entered into written history.

*Connections across Cultures and Times: Ward and Winnemucca*

Though Sarah Winnemucca, a Piute woman born in 1844, chronologically connects with Narcissa Owen more closely than she does Nancy Ward, her circumstances align her with the latter. Winnemucca's life began before the first significant encounter between Piutes and Euro-Americans. However, by the time she published her politically-charged narrative, like Ward, she had lived near or with white peoples for most of her life. Ward used her transrhetorical ability to speak in political meetings in an attempt to hold onto tracts of Cherokee ancestral lands and thereby keep the Cherokee nation intact. Winnemucca spoke in public presentations, spoke with government officials in Washington D.C., and negotiated with military officers in the hopes of having her Piute lands returned and her people reunited. By describing her adventures, Winnemucca uses her Native American female ethos to appeal to the proto-feminist desires of her white female readers. As already other, in much the same way treaty officers viewed Ward, the white men she speaks with more readily accept her public and political orations. However, in some cases, because she is a politically vocal female, men attack her character, forcing her to defend her status as a respectable and therefore legible woman in a way neither Ward nor Owen ever had to. Legibility and agency are essential to



Winnemucca and are in some ways more difficult to obtain. Though her transrhetorical stance becomes more complicated to create, Winnemucca uses the different cultural constructs of gender in her fight for land rights for the Piute nation

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Theda Perdue, Prologue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, by Theda Perdue (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1998) 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> This story is condensed from a version written down by James Mooney originally printed in the *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1900. I read and paraphrased Theda Perdue's retelling of Mooney's version, included in *Cherokee Women*.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the nature of this project, at times I write about gender balances within the Cherokee society in the past tense. This does not mean that these practices only exist in the past nor does it relegate Cherokee peoples to the past. I merely find it necessary to use the past tense in order to maintain the grammatical integrity of the section.

<sup>4</sup> The Cherokee may have had more clans in earlier times, but in Ward's time through to today there are seven recognized clans: Aniwahiya, Wolf Clan; Anikawi, Deer Clan; Anidjiskwa, Bird Clan; Aniwodi, Paint Clan; Anigotigewi, Wild Potato; Anigilohi, Longhairs; and Anisahoni, Blue (Taylor).

<sup>5</sup> According to Theda Perdue, "some sources use the terms *War Woman* and *beloved woman* interchangeably"; however, War Women "distinguished themselves in battle" and after gaining that title "participated in the Eagle Dance," "sat apart from other women and children on ceremonial occasions and partook of food and drink not normally given to women." These women also "decided the fate of war captives." Beloved

women, on the other hand, were elderly, and it is possible that War Women became beloved women after menopause (Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 39).

<sup>6</sup> See Carolyn Ross Johnston's excellent work *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907* for more on women's attitudes and input on the subject of removal.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Ward's speeches are reprinted in a few places. Primarily, I chose to use copies of them found in Karen Kilcup's anthology *Native American Women Writers 1800-1924, an Anthology*, Blackwell, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Despite my attributing each of the petitions and speeches to Ward, I enjoy believing in a more communal perception of how it may have been. I would like to assume that the rhetoric I analyze here reflects a communal council of women, asserting their feminine power within a Cherokee culture that stressed equality and balance.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective," *American Quarterly*. 28.2 (1976): 187-205.

<sup>10</sup> Williams's records his source for this material as "the Gen. Greene Papers in Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress" with additional information about the treaty discussions coming from the *Calendar of Tennessee Papers*. Neither appears to have the complete transcription of the speech.

<sup>11</sup> As previously mentioned, in the Cherokee's matrilineal society, rather than the biological father providing for and raising his children, the mother's brothers assumed the responsibility of caring for his sisters' children. Nancy Ward's uncle, also as previously

mentioned, was the renowned peace chief Attakullakulla. When he died in 1780, Ward may have felt that as his niece and as a leader in the nation her duty was to work for peace.

<sup>12</sup> E. Sterling King may have been the first to use the phrase “Pocahontas of the West” to describe Ward when he wrote a book about her entitled *The Wild Rose of the Cherokee; or, Nancy Ward, “Pocahontas of the West”* in 1895. A monument erected on her gravesite in 1923 by the Nancy Ward chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution reads, in part, “Nancy Ward, Princess and Prophetess of the Cherokee Nation, the Pocahontas of Tennessee.”

<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned problem of transcription remains; the source for Ward’s speech is murky. Williams cites two texts: “The Gen. Greene Papers in Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress” and the “*Calendar of Tennessee Papers*, 15-18” (200n). He does not provide a citation for Ward’s speech specifically, but cites Christian’s response to it as coming from the “Greene Papers.” As yet, I have not found Christian’s or Ward’s speech in either reference. With these manuscript difficulties in mind, more primary research is called for, but without it, the only option is to accept these words at face value, assume Nancy Ward as author, and allow for the accuracy of the transcription. A number of credible sources have done so: Williams in his *Tennessee during the Revolutionary War* and Karen Kilcup in her anthology *American Indian Women Writer’s 1800-1924*, among others.

<sup>14</sup> For information on gender and the balance of power, see Johnston's *Cherokee Women in Crisis*, particularly 54-60, 82. See also Perdue's argument that Cherokee women's power did not diminish in *Cherokee Women*.

<sup>15</sup> Describing the scene of the treaty meeting, Williams writes, "Nancy Ward arose, left the group of women, and thus addressed the commissioners" (200).

<sup>16</sup> An excellent map of the Cherokee nation, showing how and when each tract of land was lost is available in the *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute 1884*. It can be found on-line at <http://www.tngenweb.org/cessions/cherokee.html>.

<sup>17</sup> The loss of all land east of the Mississippi via the Treaty of New Echota does not take into account the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, a group of Cherokee who successfully stayed in what is now North Carolina. Some were granted land rights before removal, some hid out in the hills and were eventually granted land rights, and some few were removed to Indian Territory but returned. In 1866 North Carolina recognized the Eastern Cherokee as permanent residents. In 1924, the Cherokee, along with all Native Americans, gained U.S. citizenship and their land was placed in federal trust, allowing it to always remain in the possession of the Cherokee people.

<sup>18</sup> The treaty was recorded by Charles Joseph Kappler for the United States Department of the Interior in 1903. A copy of the 1817 treaty can be found on the Oklahoma State University digital library website at <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/che0140.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> In 1831 the Cherokee went to court to try and stop the state of Georgia from using state laws to force Indian removal. The U.S. Supreme Court and Chief Justice John Marshall heard *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* and declared the Cherokees to be a “domestic, dependent nation” rather than a sovereign nation and dismissed the case. The following year, the Cherokee again brought a case to the Supreme Court, *Worcester v. Georgia* (McCoughlin 1). Georgia had passed a law making it unlawful for white people to live on Cherokee land without a permit from Georgia. The Cherokee argued that the state of Georgia could not make laws governing Cherokee land. The Supreme Court and Justice Marshall ruled in favor of the Cherokee, stating “From the commencement of our government, Congress has passed acts to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indians; which treat them as nations, respect their rights, and manifest a firm purpose to afford that protection which treaties stipulate. All these acts, and especially that of 1802, which is still in force, manifestly consider the several Indian nations as distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries within which their authority is exclusive and having a right to all the lands within those boundaries which is not only acknowledged, but guaranteed, by the United States.” With this ruling, the Supreme Court acknowledged elements of sovereignty by Indian nations, but Andrew Jackson refused to acknowledge this ruling. Martin Van Buren followed Jackson’s lead and enforced removal.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston points out that white men who married Cherokee women were given Cherokee citizenship. However, a man outside of the nation could not marry a Cherokee woman without ten Cherokee men’s signatures on a petition, affirming their approval.

Although up until the Curtis Act of 1898 land was held communally, women owned their own improvements (livestock, buildings, fences, etc.). Therefore, bringing a non-Cherokee into the nation had financial as well as social impact (116).

<sup>21</sup> Owen is not correct in her description of the selection of leaders and chiefs, according to most sources.

## CHAPTER III

## SARAH WINNEMUCCA: “POSTINDIAN WARRIOR”

## WRITING FOR THE LAND

It is the first outbreak of the American Indian in human literature, and has a single aim—to tell the truth as it lies in the heart and mind of a true patriot, and one whose knowledge of the two races gives her an opportunity of comparing them justly. At this moment, when the United States seem waking up to their duty to the original possessors of our immense territory, it is of the first importance to hear what only an Indian and an Indian woman can tell. ~ Mary Mann’s Preface to *Life Among the Piutes*

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins opens her 1883 ethnographic text *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, with “I was born somewhere near 1844, but am not sure of the precise time” (5).<sup>1</sup> Her text is often labeled an autobiography, but I, like others who have studied Winnemucca, such as Andrew McClure<sup>2</sup> and David Brumble, find it to be more than a simple narrative of her life. Although parts of the text adhere to the parameters of autobiographical writing—for example the sentence above that starts the story with her birth—Winnemucca writes with the primary rhetorical and political goal of regaining land. In her earlier chapters she displays a persona that conforms to Euro-American ideas of the private, domestic female sphere, especially in her ethnographic descriptions in “Domestic and Social Moralities.”<sup>3</sup> However, as she builds the story of U.S. Government agents’ theft of her people’s land, she subtly alters her presentation of self to include actions that would be labeled masculine by Euro-American readers. For example, two thirds of the way into her story, she tells her readers: “Yes, I



went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people” (164). Using her white audience’s immediate perception of her as wild and other and her knowledge of Euro-American gender constructs, Winnemucca fashions a transrhetorical persona.

In the statement above, Winnemucca shows her ability to gain entry into the ideological male sphere, using, among other attributes, her physicality as an Indian woman to make way for her words. However, at the same time, she displays her ability to recognize and negotiate the Euro-American social expectations of women with brief self-deprecating phrases such as “only an Indian woman.” More so at the beginning of her narrative, specifically in “Domestic and Social Moralities,” she engages in what might be termed female topics, but uses those for her express purpose—securing a homeland for her people. Later in the text, having established a female legibility, she moves to capitalize on her audience’s preconceived notions of female Indian “otherness” and deploys at times an almost *uber*-male persona. Foundational in her negotiation of Euro-American gendered spheres is her strength as a Piute woman, which allows her to adopt a role as leader especially within the context of the story she tells. Near the end of recounting the details of the Bannock War, Winnemucca relates an address by her father to the Piute people in which he says, “Now hereafter we will look on her as our chieftan, for none of us are worthy of being chief but her” (193). Within the narrative she functions as a leader for her people through interactions and negotiations with people from other Native nations, the Army, and the federal government, but her ultimate act of

leadership is to write the story of the Piutes in the hopes of influencing her white audience. Through her words she fights for her goal of enlisting her politically empowered audience in her rhetorical and very real war for land. The first part of this chapter will focus on Winnemucca's creation of a transrhetorical persona, much like the one created and deployed by Ward and Owen. The second centers on what she does with that created self.

For many years, scholars of Native American literature have concentrated on authors' identities and their struggles to maintain a culturally Native self while immersed in the machinations of white America: boarding school, Christianity, individual land holding, etc. Often Indian peoples have had a white identity forced upon them, resulting in, as Gertrude Bonnin wrote, a feeling of "hang[ing] in the heart of chaos" (Zitkala-Ša, "Impressions" 97). While the discussion of the negotiation of identity proves both productive and necessary, this view on the anxiety created by a bicultural identity does not accurately describe Winnemucca's conscious creation of a transrhetorical self for the purposes of her text, one that moves fluidly between Native and white cultures and between the nineteenth-century Euro-American constructs of female and male gender ideologies. Rather than a detriment, this transrhetorical ethos can constitute the ability to negotiate in both a white and a Native world using gender perceptions and perceived characteristics, and for Winnemucca and other Native American authors it is a source of power.

When scholars hone in on identity they often neglect what Native writers do with that identity.<sup>4</sup> My investigation will focus on the transrhetorical self rather than forced

bicultural identity and will examine the rhetorical stance Winnemucca creates; that is, what message she delivers to what audience(s). As important as the identity discussion continues to be, it is productive also to enlist rhetoric into the analysis, examining how Native women writers consciously create themselves for their multiple audiences and for an explicit purpose: the reclamation of land. Like many Native American writers, Winnemucca's carefully chosen ethnographic and historic details purposefully create a plea, perhaps for recognition and understanding, but decidedly for restored ownership of her people's stolen reservation. She writes, in effect, as a political lobbyist in an effort to re-establish ownership of ancestral lands illegally expropriated by an admittedly corrupt American government system. This chapter investigates Winnemucca's rhetorical stance, focusing first on her transrhetorical persona and then on her multiple audiences and messages.

*"What only an Indian and an Indian woman can tell": Externally Created Identity versus Internally Established Persona*

Many scholars have studied Winnemucca through the lens of hybridity, as a bridge figure between white and Native culture. However, through her descriptive images of Piute land and her written appeal for land ownership, we can better view Winnemucca as an early example of what Gerald Vizenor calls a "postindian warrior" "encounter[ing] enemies with the same courage in literature as ancestors once evinced on horses, and creat[ing] stories with a new sense of survivance" (4), survivance being Vizenor's term for both Native peoples' survival during colonization and resistance to the colonizing effects. Through her political activism, enacted via the writing of her

narrative, through her oral presentations, and in her petition to Congress, she fought what Jace Weaver calls “internal colonialism”: a colonization that is not “a small minority of colonizers from the *métropole* exert[ing] power over a large indigenous population in an area removed from the ‘mother country’” but is, instead, “the autochthonous population...swamped by a large colonizer group, which, after several generations no longer has a *métropole* to which to return” (10).<sup>5</sup> In order to both survive and resist the “large colonizer group” of Euro-Americans that threaten to engulf her and her people, Winnemucca in turns chastises, coerces, and appeals to that same non-Native reading public. Using rhetorical strategies of ethnographic description, historical revision, and sentimentality to gain popular support, she demands that the U.S. government return Piute peoples to their Malheur Reservation. Land provides sustenance and serves as an elemental connector in the cyclical interdependence of all things. Traditionally, as has been established, land plays a integral part in how indigenous peoples of North America, define themselves. Piutes, especially as we see in Winnemucca’s text, need their land to continue their existence. She shows in her narrative that without land her people literally starve.

Before discussing Winnemucca’s transrhetorical persona, I explore and respond to the trends of contemporary scholarship, in the process providing some historical background. Then, in an analysis of *Life Among the Piutes* focused more particularly on her expressions of and desires for land for her people, in the second section I present a close reading of a passage that occurs early in the text in which Winnemucca and her cousin are buried by their mothers, exploring how the author’s ethnographic discourse

encodes appeals to two audiences. In section three, I discuss a later passage in which her rhetorical strategy of direct address to her white Christian audience exposes their complicity in land theft. The concluding section examines briefly Winnemucca's petition for change, which appears at the end of her text. These three rhetorical moments—a first person, ethnographic description of the Piutes; a historical revisionist accusation, written in the form of direct address, of the hypocrisy of white Christians; and a sentimental plea for action—rather than being hybrid moments of culture sharing, exist primarily to shape her white audience into political activists, willing to pressure the U.S. government into allowing the Piutes to return home. In so doing, however, Winnemucca does not lose sight of her own people as audience. Encoded in her narrative are moments of resistance that speak directly to Piute peoples. Each of Winnemucca's pivotal, transrhetorical moments, demonstrating the fundamental role of land in Native identity and community, anticipates and exemplifies Vizenor's concept of survivance; her overall narrative conforms to Weaver's theory of communitism and, moreover, reflects Paula Gunn Allen's concept of traditional Native literature.

### *Contemporary Scholarship and Historical Background*

The temptation to perceive Winnemucca as too “white,” that is, too assimilated in Euro-American ways to constitute a voice of resistance against federal Indian policies, nags at contemporary readers. At a young age, she learned English and was exposed to a non-Native way of living; it is a type of life she admits enjoying. Canfield reports that in an 1870 interview Winnemucca said, “I like the Indian life tolerably well; however, my

only object in staying with these people is that I may do them good. I would rather be with my people, but not to live with them as they live” (65).<sup>6</sup> In *Life Among the Piutes* she supports the governmental appointments of “good” agents who teach her people Euro-American farming so that they can give up traditional Piute hunting and gathering. The U.S. Army found her service as a translator invaluable in their efforts to subdue Native uprisings. As Catherine Fowler points out some scholars “see her as a tool of the military, for whom she worked at various periods of her life, and even worse, as a traitor who caused members of her own tribe to be killed and captured in various campaigns” (4). Her choices, at times, puzzle readers, especially those looking for the Native American whose writing completely resists Euro-American culture.

The blending of white and Piute societies, as Siobhan Senier shows, has led critics to attempt to select parts of her narrative that signified Indianness and compare them with the parts that demonstrated a more assimilated whiteness. Scholars even attribute contradictory meaning to the form her text takes, labeled by some as autobiography. According to Senier, LaVonne Ruoff sees the form of autobiography as “antithetical to indigenous tradition” whereas David Brumble perceives autobiography as “an integral part [of Native] tradition” (94). This disagreement speaks to meaning. Does her text celebrate the self in normative Euro-American fashion? Winnemucca has been accused of self-aggrandizement (Stewart as qtd. in Fowler 3). However, Paula Gunn Allen writes, “The purpose of traditional American Indian literature is never simply pure self-expression. The ‘private soul at any public wall’ is a concept alien to American Indian thought” (55). She continues, describing literary goals that are particularly Native:

[T]hrough language one can share one's singular being with that of the community and know within oneself the communal knowledge of the tribe.... American Indian people do not content themselves with simple preachments of this truth, but through the sacred power of utterance they seek to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things. (55-56)

Allen's description of Native literary purpose can be applied to Winnemucca's text.

Allen writes that by sharing "one's singular being," with the tribe, or "community," one finds the tribal knowledge rooted within oneself. Winnemucca's story diverges from Allen's description if the "community" Allen describes must be entirely Native; for, although Winnemucca shares her "singular being," her story is primarily directed at a community that is not Native. However, Winnemucca's storytelling "seek[s] to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern" her life and the life of her tribe. Her narrative, imbued with sacred power, particularly in the burying scene, seeks to "shape and mold" the Non-native community to which she writes. And, in a secondary way, I argue that she also directs her story to the Piute people. In the end, she writes for her communities, in an attempt to direct and determine one, the Euro-American, for the benefit of the other, the Piute.

Recently, perhaps partly in an effort to move away from the essentializing labeling of what it means to be an "authentic" Native and to focus more closely on her message or purpose, scholars have noted the explicit resistance to assimilation in Winnemucca's text, usually in the form of her critique of white culture. For instance, Eric Gary Anderson writes of *Life of the Piutes*, "the finished product preserves

Winnemucca's authoritative and still unsettling arguments about white, federal, Christian misdealings with the Paiute people" (125). He goes on to say that she "out moralize[s] the moralists" and "outcivilize[s] the 'civilizers'" (125). Noreen Grover Lape points out that, although Winnemucca had a "cultural attraction to whites," her "moral quest" was "to help the beleaguered Paiutes" ("Double Consciousness" 39). Moving away from moments of assimilation or hybridity and toward an acknowledgment of places of resistance yields a much more productive look at Winnemucca's work; however, particular attention to the rhetoric associated with land can do even more. Specifically, turning the rhetorical attention away from author's identity and focusing on message and audience produces an investigation of what a transrhetorical voice can accomplish.

In addition to acknowledging her resistance to assimilation, these same scholars tend to focus on Winnemucca, especially as she portrays herself (and is portrayed by her editor Mary Mann) in *Life Among the Piutes*, as a mediator between the two cultures: a woman attempting to explain Piute culture to whites and to bring white culture to Piutes. Senier is critical specifically of Cheryl Walker, Noreen Grover Lape, Maggie Montesinos Sale, Margo Lukens, and Eric Gary Anderson, stating that their analyses of Winnemucca tend "to promote her 'mediations' at the expense of her cultural traditionalism and protectiveness" (80-81). I believe that viewing her as a cultural broker is productive, and the ethnographic voice of her text does speak to that. However, I agree with Senier that "Winnemucca's text ...is not necessarily invested in revealing the experience of one culture to someone of another culture"; it is much more political (92). Moments of bridge building have purpose, plainly spelled out by the petition at the conclusion of the



text: to gain back land for the Piute people so that they can, through control of their own land (and here it is productive to think of Paula Gunn Allen's ideas of Native literature), control the direction of their own Native life. In order to have that control, Winnemucca focuses on land as a source of *survival* and *resistance*, Vizenor's "survivance," and the message that emerges from that rhetorical focus reverberates throughout the narrative.

Although I may appear to come dangerously close to defending her "Piute-ness," I hope to navigate through the either/or rhetoric of identity that labels Winnemucca as *either* assimilated "white" *or* contentiously and tenaciously Piute. Because she creates her ethos as transrhetorical, I argue that she moves fluidly from culture to culture and within both gendered rhetorical spheres. To essentialize her as one or the other is to keep the discussion mired in identity politics and miss her productive, transrhetorical persona and the rich opportunity to discuss her audience(s) and message(s). In addition, although it is true that sections of the text are ethnographic, I am resisting the urge to pick through her narrative and illuminate moments of mediation, or, in Homi Bhabha's postcolonial terms, "third-space-ed-ness" and hybridity. More important than her hybridized identity is her agency; that is what she does with the tools that hybridity brings. Because she lives in the very flood of internal colonization, Winnemucca has to negotiate between cultures daily, perhaps even moment to moment, adjusting her actions in order to function in either culture separately and but more often in both cultures simultaneously, always with the goal of resisting assimilation and ensuring her nation's survival through control of land. She needs her transrhetorical fluidity to do what she does and write what she writes.

A brief explanation of historical context allows for better understanding of the position from which Winnemucca wrote. In the span of Winnemucca's lifetime, from her childhood in the 1840s to adulthood and the publishing of *Life Among the Piutes* in 1883, the Piute people underwent rapid, apocalyptic changes. Before Euro-American contact, as Gae Whitney Canfield writes, "The Northern Paiute Indians freely roamed the high deserts of the Great Basin of what is now western Nevada, northeastern California, and southern Oregon" (3). Piutes migrated over large areas of land according to the availability of food; "The women were accustomed to traveling miles each day to the sources of food as they came in season" (Canfield 4). However, after the discovery of gold in 1849, the Humboldt River route through the Great Basin "became a virtual highway" for Euro-American gold seekers "because it offered water over most of its length. Thus for the summer season at least, game was frightened far from the roadway, stock grazed on the wild food grains, and large portions of this rich hunting and gathering ground was preempted from native use" (Knack 48).

When a rich strike of gold was discovered, the Comstock Lode near Virginia City, Piute people could not weather the environmental repercussions. Indian agent H. Dodge recognized the precariousness of their situation: "The encroachment of the Emigrant [has] driven away the game upon which they depend for subsistence....They must therefore steal or starve" (qtd. in Knack 50). His solution was, in accordance with Indian policy at the time, 1859, to remove them to a tract of land that eventually became, in 1874, the Pyramid Lake Reservation (Knack 50). In addition, in 1867, General George Crook established Fort Harney in the center of Piute land, harassing them until "Most of

the Indians had been starved out or exterminated. When they did surrender, it was only after they had been reduced to eating their horses” (Canfield 55). At this point, the Piutes fought simply to continue to exist. As seen in Winnemucca’s narrative, the fact that the federal government refused to allow the Piutes an acceptable parcel of land to call home exacerbated all of their suffering. They were driven off of their reservation by a corrupt agent, Reinhardt, and then many of them were forcibly marched up to the Yakima reservation in Washington State as retribution for their alleged part in the Bannock War.<sup>7</sup> Thus, securing a homeland became Winnemucca’s cause: the reason she spoke publicly, wrote her narrative, and solicited supporters to sign her petition.

In her rhetorical positioning, she is not fighting to be white or to be the hybridized bridge between white and Native; instead, she fluidly deploys her transrhetorical identity as a means to an end. She fights for land for her nation so that her people can live and can control the way in which they live. Jace Weaver writes, “Behind this wrangling [about identity] is the seemingly constant, essentializing attempt by some activists and intellectuals to define ‘Indianness’ while the majority of Indians live their lives as if such definitions were largely irrelevant, living out their own Indianness without a great deal of worry about such contestations over identity” (4).<sup>8</sup> Sarah Winnemucca, it seems, lived her life not particularly concerned with a prescribed definition of either whiteness or Indianness. Nowhere in *Life Among the Piutes* does she attempt to assert or defend a self-definition based on race. Why should she? There never seems to be a lack of confidence, in truth, quite the opposite; she is a woman who knows who she is, embodying Allen’s description of Native-authored narrative: the goal is communal, not

individual. For Winnemucca there were more important things to worry about than what Jace Weaver would label “outside view predicates (5)”: that is, whether or not people outside of the Piute nation viewed her as Indian; they did.<sup>9</sup> What she needed to do was to use their perception of her as both Indian woman other, acceptably enacting masculinity, and legibly Euro-American female, conforming to the constructs of True Womanhood, in order to create an effective, transrhetorical ethos from which to speak.

*“Anybody can speak...women and all”: Gender Equality within the Piute Nation*

A comparison between chapter two, “Domestic and Social Moralities,” and chapter seven, “The Bannock War” affords the clearest view of Winnemucca’s creation and presentation of her transrhetorical persona. After providing historical background in her first chapter, “First Meeting of Piutes and Whites,” Winnemucca moves to a particularly ethnographic section that one can imagine her white editor, Mary Peabody Mann, envisioned as having a humanizing effect for white readers predisposed to viewing Indians as savages. The section also works to establish Winnemucca and the Piute women as subscribing to Euro-American norms of femininity. To that end, much of the chapter is given over to descriptions of courtship practices, marriage, and child-rearing, before it moves from these decidedly female-domestic topics to descriptions of socio-political decision making, religion, and communal hunting practices, topics that would be considered within the ideological, Euro-American male sphere. Winnemucca makes two crucial moves in this chapter: she use a white, Euro-American, female rhetoric of domesticity to make Piute political statements, and she establishes Piute gender equality

that gives her agency to perform in acceptably transgressive masculine ways in the later chapter, “The Bannock War.”

In “Domestic and Social Moralities” Winnemucca starts with a description of Piute children, but rather than allowing it to simply explain one culture to another, she crafts it to do political work as well. She writes, “Our children are taught to be good” and suggests that this is accomplished through the stories their parents tell them. By highlighting that they are told, “even of the first mother of the human race” Winnemucca does double work. She raises the status of women by declaring a mother as originator (and making no mention of a heavenly father), and she creates racial equality by lumping all, Piute and white, into the descriptor “the human race”; she fluidly moves among the race and gender spheres and painlessly takes her audience with her. However, as in much of her prose, she never allows her white audience to become overly comfortable. Within the same paragraph, she asserts, “Indians do not swear,—they have no words for swearing till they learn them of white men” (45). Interesting to note is the grammatical inclusion of “men.” Winnemucca could have used “whites” or “white people”; however, she uses “white men,” raising the status of Indians and raising the status of women, in comparison to white men. She, being an Indian woman, is therefore doubly superior. The brilliance here is the subtlety of her writing. Without ever explicitly criticizing white culture or lauding her own, she in effect does both and establishes herself as an authoritative persona within multiple rhetorical spheres, particularly the Euro-American domestic *and* political.

In focusing on the domestic, Winnemucca proves her understanding of what proper, white, nineteenth-century womanhood should embody. In her extensive interaction with Euro-American culture through her stays with white families, time spent in white schools, marriage to white men, and communications with Mary Mann, her editor, Winnemucca most probably acquired a working knowledge of the gender expectations of Euro-American women. Of the four criteria of True Womanhood—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—purity and domesticity are the two that Winnemucca seizes on in order to play the role of proper Euro-American woman. However, even in her presentation of these qualities in Piute women she explains them in such a way that they convey equality between the sexes and a certain strength ascribed to women. The attributes of piety and submissiveness get refigured so as to allow her to more directly affirm a Piute sense of female equality and political power.

To confirm the purity of Piute women, Winnemucca describes the courting rituals of her people. She goes into great detail about the spring Flower Festival in which the young women with the approval of and under the supervision of their “fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers” sing songs about their flower names and get to spend time with the young men who would be their “beaux.” Winnemucca explains that a Piute girl “sings of herself, and her sweetheart, dancing along by her side, [who] helps her sing the song she makes” (47). At a glance, there is nothing particularly subversive about the explanation; however, as Winnemucca describes it, the woman is the instigator of the song and the man is there to help her. Her description can be

interpreted as a reversal of Euro-American norms in which women are viewed as the helper of the man.

An additional proof of purity is Winnemucca's description of courting that specifically leads to marriage. She stresses that a girl must have "come to womanhood" and must have gone through a celebratory festival in order to be allowed to marry. Then, she states that a young man makes his intentions known by entering the family teepee at night and sitting silently at the feet of the young woman. This happens night after night until the young woman decides whether or not she wishes to marry him. Again, something that could get glossed over as a charming and "primitive" sentimental ritual by a white audience also contains subversive rhetoric. The man at the foot of the woman is a hierarchical inversion of Euro-American expectations, as is the idea that the ultimate power to decide lies with the woman rather than with her family or her father.

Winnemucca is quick to emphasize that a young woman "is never forced by her parents to marry against her wishes" (49). Until marriage, Winnemucca shows young Piute women as pure and under the careful care of their elders. This description gains Winnemucca the respect afforded to "pure" Euro-American women. Nevertheless, Piute women are also afforded more autonomy than their white counterparts, which keeps them somewhat outside of the confines of white constructs of womanhood.

Winnemucca adopts the positive connotations of Euro-American domesticity by describing Piute life after marriage in terms familiar to her white audience. As she depicts it, the wife "is to dress all the game, prepare the food, clean the buckskins, make his moccasins, dress his hair, bring all the wood,—in short, do all the household work"

(49). Although some of the chores differ, assigning the “household work” to the woman connected Piute women’s lives to those of their white counterparts. However, instead of describing the relationship between the two as woman serving the needs of man, being his “helpmeet,” Winnemucca states that the young woman “promises to ‘be himself’” (49); she describes this later as “They [women] faithfully keep with them [men] in all the dangers they can share. They not only take care of their children together, but they do everything together; and when they grow blind...they take sweet care of one another” (53). This picture along with her earlier description of the husband “assum[ing] all his wife’s household work” directly after she has a child, presents a domestic picture in which men’s and women’s work, although distinct from one another, are not exclusive. The Piute society expects men to share in the duties of childcare, for “[i]f he does not do his part in the care of the child, he is considered an outcast” (50). So, although her depiction of Piute women in some ways conforms to the idea of Euro-American domesticity, it also diverges from it in important ways. The delineation of equality and the permeability of what is defined as a woman’s domain (that is, the household and the domestic chores associated with the family) help to create Winnemucca as a recognizable, True Woman but also an exotic “other”; this transrhetorical fluidity creates a rhetorical space that Winnemucca can then take advantage of when she assumes a more masculine stance in “The Bannock War” chapter.

Having proved Piute women are both pure and domestic, Winnemucca invokes the other two Euro-American, True Womanhood traits of piety and submissiveness but not in ways that would win her “happiness and power” in Euro-American society.



Instead of piously accepting Euro-Christian religion without question, she rejects a Methodist minister's depiction of hell. When she is a child, a minister tells her "everybody that did wrong was burned in hell forever" (54). The thought of being in heaven and looking down helplessly at friends burning in hell makes Winnemucca sick to the point that her mother and others in the tribe tell her that the story is not true; there is no hell. She relates that "hell" and "wrong doing" happen on earth, that for the Piutes, the spirit-land is a place of no wrong-doing and "so no hell." "That," she says, "is our religion" (55). Instead of adhering to the minister's words, she questions male authority and uses the trope of piety to critique Euro-American Christianity.

Additionally, rather than submissiveness, Winnemucca depicts a society where men and women share equally in the decision making. In community discussions, all participate. Men sit in the inner circle and women in the outer circle. All are active in the public, political debates:

The women know as much as the men do, and their advice is often asked. We have a republic as well as you. The council-tent is our Congress, and anybody can speak who has anything to say, women and all. They are always interested in what their husbands are doing and thinking about. And they take some part even in the wars. (Winnemucca 53)

Winnemucca writes, "If women could go into your Congress I think justice would soon be done to the Indians" implying that white women should act as Piute Women do and, rather than be submissive, take charge in the interest of justice (53). Her white women readers are her potential allies and so she must find ways to motivate them to action.

The adaptation of certain elements of Euro-American women's rhetoric creates Winnemucca as a legible woman, respectable enough to be heard, but to be heard she must gain entry into the white male sphere. Her strategy for breaking through rhetorically is to present herself performing tasks generally reserved for men. Despite depicting herself earlier in the narrative as frequently crying and repeatedly in fear of being raped by white men, more often Winnemucca shows herself to be a woman able to beat both white and Indian men at whatever they are asked to do. Reading her text as a *bildungsroman*, a turning point occurs near the middle of the story where she stops being a frightened child and begins to take on a leadership role. She writes in response to her people asking her to "talk for them," "If it was in my power I would be too happy to do so for you, but I am powerless, being a woman, and yet you come to me for help" (139). But, in many instances after this moment Winnemucca does talk for and lead her people, ultimately by writing *Life Among the Piutes*.

If Winnemucca established herself as a leader only among her people, that might have been enough for her to gain entry into the white male rhetorical sphere. However, particularly in the chapter "The Bannock War," she shows herself to be a leader of both Piute and white men, all the while maintaining enough Euro-American female respectability to remain recognizably female and therefore rhetorically acceptable. She is other enough to gain entry but familiar enough to be legible. Her ability to manipulate these two gendered constructs garners her transrhetorical agency. Winnemucca shows her leadership position within the tribe by describing how she is treated by Egan, a highly respected member of her nation:

The second chief, Egan, got up again to talk. He began by saying, 'My dear mother,'—for this is the way our people address any one who is their superior. If a woman, it is their mother; if a man, it is their father. So Egan began in this way. When he got up to talk to me..." (Winnemucca 143)

Here, she shows that she is "superior" to a "second chief," Egan. But during the Bannock war, she also takes the opportunity to present herself as equal to and also able to lead white men. When hostilities heat up during the war, Captain Bernard tells Sarah "I would like to have you go as my guard" (150). She instead ends up accompanying four Indians and one white man through the unfriendly territory, but before they leave she receives a surprise marriage proposal from a smitten white man. Adhering to sentimental form and maintaining her Euro-American feminine ethos, she tells him, "I thank you very much for your kind offer, but I cannot marry a man that I don't love" (151). By slipping deftly from the masculine role of a guard to the feminine role of a woman who will only marry for love, Winnemucca constructs her transrhetorical ethos.

As she travels, she repeatedly refers to her male traveling companions as "my men" or even "my boys" and is often reassuring them and giving them orders. She weaves in a certain amount of bravado as she relates the adventure to her readers, writing,

I said,--'Boys, let us stop for the night, for our horses will surely fall over us and kill us, and then the hostile Bannocks will not have the pleasure of killing us.' Here my men laughed at me, so we stopped for the night and ate our hard bread without any water. Then I gave my orders. (155)

When the men are about to give up emotionally, Winnemucca is the one to rally their spirits: "I saw that they were afraid. I said to them, 'It is of no use to be afraid; we have come to see them [the Bannocks] and see them we must, and if they kill us we have to die and that is all about it, and now we must have something to eat'" (156). Brave and pragmatic, she makes a better man than her men. But just when she comes close to overdoing her gender switch, she pulls back enough to remind readers that she is still a woman. At a point in the narrative where the group must decide which path to follow, Winnemucca relates the following conversation: "I said to my boys, 'What do you two think?...You are men, you can decide better than I can'" (156). Much like Nancy Ward does when she addresses the treaty officers with the statement "You know that women are always looked upon as nothing" (27), this declaration by Winnemucca makes her appear to acknowledge and accept a gender hierarchy. However, she tells us that her men reply, "'Now, Sarah, you know this country better than we do, and you know what to do...Whatever you say we will follow you'" (156). As author of the story, she can maintain her gender equality by relating their response.

Eventually Sarah Winnemucca becomes the hero to her people and to the white army officers. When she reaches her father and her people she says, "I have come to save you all if you will do as I wish you to and be quiet about it'" then directs her father on what to do to save his people (her people) from the hostile Bannocks(159). Upon the conclusion of the story, she relates, "Yes, I went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people" (164). Moving fluidly from Piute to

white cultures and from male to female rhetorical spheres, often bringing all into play at once, Winnemucca establishes a transrhetorical persona that gains her agency and authority to plead her case.

*“Oh can anyone imagine my feelings”: an Ethnographic Appeal to Two Audiences*

Winnemucca writes her connection to land into the fabric of her narrative from its inception. In contrast to her vague notion of when, her knowledge of *where* she and her people lived at the time of her birth is very clear. She explains that when she was born, “My people were scattered at that time over nearly all the territory now known as Nevada,” her grandfather “was camped near Humboldt Lake,” and she makes note of “a party traveling eastward from California” (5). She situates herself by laying out the territory of her people—nearly all of Nevada; by giving her reader a center point through the positioning of an important elder—her grandfather “camped near Humboldt Lake”; and by showing where the beginning trouble comes from—the west, California. Land, from the earliest moments of the text, is Winnemucca’s theme, goal, and identifying marker.

In another example, very early in the narrative, she describes what could be a horrifying scene, but what is instead an explicit demonstration of land and writing about land as both survival and resistance. When her band of people hear that whites are coming into their territory, Winnemucca writes that her mother and aunt decide the only way to save the children from being captured and maybe even eaten is to bury them:

So our mothers buried me and my cousin, planted sage bushes over our faces to keep the sun from burning them, and there we were left all day.

Oh, can any one imagine my feelings *buried alive*, thinking every minute that I was to be unburied and eaten up by the people that my grandfather loved so much?...Thanks be to God! the night came at last. Oh, how I cried and said: “Oh, father, have you forgotten me? Are you never coming for me?”...

Then I heard my mother say, “T is right here!” Oh, can any one in this world ever imagine what were my feelings when I was dug up by my poor mother and father? My cousin and I were once more happy in our mothers’ and fathers’ care, and we were taken to where all the rest were. (11-12)

Some key moments in this passage require close investigation. The first line describes the burial and its purposes. For a white audience, that explanation works very simply: the children are hidden in the sand and sage bushes shield their faces. However, in sacred ceremonies performed by various plains tribes, sage smoke connects the people to the Great Spirit (Dyer). Sage functions as both a medicinal and a sacred plant provided to Piute people from the land. The University of Michigan at Dearborn maintains a website on Native American ethnobotany. In it, Piute uses of sagebrush are listed 38 times as cures for various ailments and once as “ceremonial medicine” “used by dancers to pat themselves to be made spiritually clean, [for] curing ceremonies” (“*Artemisia tridentata*”). Thus, Winnemucca’s use of it here invests the scene with layers of meaning: As a physical protector sage equals survival by protecting the girls from sunburn and from discovery by whites. As a spiritual symbol of the connection between the land and the Piute people, sage demonstrates a moment of resistance. To maintain Piute land-based spirituality is to psychologically resist the white encroachment of Christianity.

By writing about being placed into the very land itself and being saved through the cover of a traditionally spiritual, healing plant, Winnemucca demonstrates a literal

and symbolic connection between the people and the land, and resists, successfully in this instance, being either literally or symbolically eaten up by whites. Here, Winnemucca is playing a “language game” using her “Natural reason and reflective nature,” which Vizenor calls “virtues of the literature of survivance” (69). This connection through the sacred to the communal, to the nation and to tribal identity, also brings Winnemucca’s text out of “simple self-expression” and into “ceremonial literature [that] redirect[s] private emotion and integrate[s] the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic [Native] framework” (Allen 55). Using the reference to sage, Winnemucca imbues the storytelling with what Allen calls “the sacred power of utterance,” which, as she suggests of all Native literature, seeks to “shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things” (55).

Next in the passage Winnemucca implores, “Oh, can any one imagine my feelings *buried alive*, thinking every minute that I was to be unburied and eaten up by the people that my grandfather loved so much?” She italicizes *buried alive* for effect; being buried would horrify her white readers. Her fear, though, is not so much of being buried by her mother and aunt. Her fear is revealed in the next part of her question, “thinking every minute that I was to be *unburied*” (emphasis added). Because her people, her mother and aunt, know how to use the land, they do so; they protect their children, physically and spiritually, by burying them directly into the land.

The last part of her question completes the explanation of what most frightens her: she fears that she will be “unburied and eaten up by the people that [her] grandfather loved so much”; that is, white people. Directly before this moment in her narrative,

Winnemucca's aunt says, "Let us bury our girls, or we shall all be killed and eaten up," (11) and Winnemucca points out that this fear is real by referring, a few pages later, to the Donner party who did indeed resort to cannibalism (15). In the passage in which she describes being buried and then unburied by her parents, she inserts layers of meaning. This scene in particular shows the land and the people as one; as a child buried in the land with sage "growing" out of her face, she becomes the land itself, and, because she is in and of the land, the land saves her from being eaten. In 1883, as an adult, what Sarah Winnemucca is fearful of and is fighting against is white settlers "eating up" the land by displacing Piute people. Winnemucca's fear is not of being "*buried alive*"; it is of being metaphorically "*unburied* and eaten up. The Piutes had their reservation taken by a corrupt agent and had lost their people to the diaspora resulting from the U.S. government forcing many of them to walk hundreds of miles to the Yakima reservation. In her narrative, Winnemucca resists her people being "unburied" from their homeland and "eaten up" by government peoples and policies. Losing land for her and for her people equals losing individual *and* communal life.

In her narrative, her mother and father return to her and dig her up. They know their land intimately and use it to save their child. More importantly, because they, rather than the white people, find her and her cousin, the two children are "once more happy in [their] mothers' and fathers' care, and ...were taken to where all the rest were." The last part of the sentence contains important cultural information. Vizenor points to iteration of community as a moment of survivance for Native people, asserting "Tribal power is more communal than personal, and the power of the spoken word goes with the stories of



the survivors, and becomes the literature of survivance” (135). The two little girls survive to be with their community; Winnemucca’s “stories of the survivor” becomes the literature of survivance. Control over the land equates with unification of the people, a coming together that is necessary, as shown in Winnemucca’s ethnographic descriptions of traditional gatherings, for the survivance of the Piute nation.

What to make of the paragraph that concludes Winnemucca’s burial story? She writes:

I was once buried alive; but my second burial shall be for ever [sic], where no father or mother will come and dig me up. It shall not be with throbbing heart that I shall listen for coming footsteps. I shall be in the sweet rest of peace, — I, the chieftain’s weary daughter. (12)

In some ways, this passage seems to reflect white notions of the Vanishing Indian.

Winnemucca is dead and buried, and no Piute mother and father come to rescue her, as they did after her first burial. Her heart no longer throbs; there are no “coming footsteps.” The passage echoes Christian rhetoric in that she is in the “sweet rest of peace.” However, this passage also reads rhetorically as a representation of survivance: survival on (and within) the land, and resistance to white encroachment upon that land and upon Piute culture.

Winnemucca writes that “no mother or father” will come to dig her up, but she follows that with the statement “It shall not be with throbbing heart that I shall listen for coming footsteps.” In her description of being buried when she was a child, her heart throbbed with the fear that she would be unburied by white people. In this passage,

although on the surface her heart does not throb any more because she is dead, the sentence's grammar reveals something different: she is still listening—"I shall listen for coming footsteps"—but she is not fearful—"not...with a throbbing heart." She would only *not* be afraid if there were no possibility of being unburied by white people. On a piece of land occupied by her people and her people alone, she would not have to be afraid of white people "eating up" the Piutes and their land, even long after her death. Winnemucca embeds here a recurring assertion for Piute owned and controlled land, one rhetorically that would hold different meanings for her two different audiences. Whites would be appalled at the lengths her mother had to go to protect her and might be pressed to action on behalf of the Piute people. However, Winnemucca could have envisioned an audience who might be reading her narrative many years after publication, one that might include a greater number of Piute peoples reading in English but also residing back on their ancestral land. These Piute people would more readily see a continued connection to Piute lands and ways, and may detect her hopefulness for them in the midst of her own dire times.

Additionally, within the passage she disrupts what appears to be Christian rhetoric, and she adheres to Piute notions of self and community. After she calls death her "sweet rest of peace," she follows with "I, the chieftain's weary daughter." Subtly she writes against the encroaching white, Christian culture in two ways. First, she does not characterize herself as a child of the paternalistic, white government, not a child of any Indian reservation agent, good or bad, and, most importantly, not a child of a white, Christian God or Jesus. She is "*the chieftain's weary daughter*." Second, rather than use

her individual father, she uses “chieftain’s,” which evokes thoughts of the whole community of Piute people—another instance of “tribal power” as “more communal than personal” (Vizenor 135). The addition of the word “weary” underscores her struggle, preparing her readers to listen to what she is fighting for, explicitly stated in the petition at the end: a return of tribal lands.

*“Oh, for Shame!”: Winnemucca’s Righteous Rhetoric*

In a number of instances in the text, Winnemucca makes direct pleas for a homeland for the Piutes and demands the Piutes be assigned either a good agent or United States soldiers as caretakers. Eventually, because of corrupt Indian agent dealings, she calls for the end of the reservation system altogether, which leads to her supporting Massachusetts senator Henry Laurens Dawes and the policy of allotment, the infamous and almost wholly detrimental Dawes Act.<sup>10</sup> Although she could not have predicted the scope of the devastating effects of allotment, Winnemucca knew that Native peoples without inalienable legal control of land remained vulnerable to exploitation; therefore, although she supported Dawes, her support of the act was not unconditional. Winnemucca requested significant alterations to the proposed allotment in an attempt to secure communal control for Piute people over their own parcels of land. These requests, most certainly, were ignored, and the Dawes Act that passed in 1887 was yet another duplicitous federal policy that created more problems than it solved for Native nations, including the Piutes.

Winnemucca gives us a glimpse of Piute life at the onset of internal colonization.

She writes that her father tells his people,

Let us keep away from the emigrant roads and stay in the mountains all summer. There are a great many pine-nuts this summer, and we can lay up great supplies for the coming winter, and if the emigrants don't come too early, we can take a run down and fish for a month, and lay up dried fish. I know we can dry a great many in a month, and young men can go into the valleys on hunting excursions, and kill as many rabbits as they can. In that way we can live in the mountains all summer and all winter too. (15)

The Piute people do what they can to maintain food supplies—following their traditional hunting and gathering patterns—but already, in the 1840s and early 1850s, they are impacted by the presence of white “emigrants.” By 1860, Winnemucca relates that the federal government had “given” the Pyramid and Muddy Lakes Reservation to a band of Piutes (76). However, seven short years later, after the railroad runs through their reservation land, white people again disrupt what had been self-sufficient ways of living and Piute-controlled land holding. Winnemucca writes,

out of those two lakes we caught beautiful mountain trout, weighing two to twenty-five pounds each, which would have given us a good income if we had it all as at first. Since the railroad ran through in 1867, the white people have taken all the best part of the reservation from us, and one of the lakes also. (76)

Relating the Piutes' predicament, Winnemucca uses her rhetoric to simultaneously chastise and appeal to her white audience.

At the Malheur Reservation in Oregon established for the Paiutes in 1867, a place outside their seasonal migration patterns, agent Samuel Parrish teaches them how to farm and allows time and ammunition for hunting. Once again, however, the Piutes' attempt to establish control over land and way of life is thwarted. Winnemucca writes that white settlers "wanted the west end of our reservation" (115). In time, Parrish is removed because he is not Christian, and another white man, Agent Reinhard, and his cronies obtain not just the west end but the whole reservation by making life there so untenable for the Piutes that they are forced to leave. Winnemucca reports that Reinhard withholds goods provided by the government and intended for Piute peoples. He takes the best of their harvest for himself, as "payment" to the government. In short, he creates a situation, purposefully according to Winnemucca's depiction, in which the Piutes are freezing and starving, and he does so in order to drive them off of their own reservation land.

Winnemucca relates that on April 21, 1878, while she was living away from the reservation, she was visited by some of her people. They tell her Reinhard "has not been issuing rations" (137), "so we are really starving over there, and we don't know what to do" (138). By May 29, when they speak with her again, she writes, "They had come back to tell me about Agent Reinhard's doings. He had driven them away from the agency; and their people were all down the river, about twenty-five miles from it" (138). The constant encroachment on Native land by white people, and the subsequent starvation and dispossession of land that followed, prompted Winnemucca to act on the behalf of her people for their survival. Winnemucca works to save them by writing *Life*

*Among the Piutes* with the goal of soliciting help from a white audience. However, she shows her simultaneous resistance to that same audience, as well as her desire to maintain agency within her own culture, by inserting moments that speak more clearly to a potential Piute audience.

Winnemucca's writing about the Piute peoples' "wrongs and claims," provides an example of a Native author taking the opportunity to differentiate for a white audience the "savage" from the "civilized." Calling into question the white definition of both "savage" and "civilized" allows Winnemucca, rhetorically, to force her audience to question their very claim to "this land [,] the home of the free and the brave" (Winnemucca 207). In a seminal moment in the text, Winnemucca moves to second person for a direct and scathing address to her audience, best read in its entirety:

Oh, for shame! You who are educated by a Christian government in the art of war; the practice of whose profession makes you natural enemies of the savages, so called by you. Yes, you, who call yourselves the great civilization; you who have knelt upon Plymouth Rock, covenanting with God to make this land the home of the free and the brave. Ah, then you rise from your bended knees and seizing the welcoming hands of those who are owners of this land, which you are not, your carbines rise upon the bleak shore, and your so-called civilization sweeps inland from the ocean wave; but, oh, my God! leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood and strewn by the bones of two races, the inheritor and the invader; and I am crying out to you for justice,—yes, pleading for the far-off plains of the West, for the dusky mourner, whose tears of love are pleading for her husband, or for their children, who are sent away from them. Your Christian minister will hold my people against their will; not because he loves them,—no, far from it,—but because it puts money in his pockets. (207)

To open the passage, she inverts the audience's perceived moral hierarchy, writing, "Oh, for shame!" She, the "savage" Indian, is shaking her finger at them, the "civilized" white

audience, calling to their attention their own moral inadequacies. Next, she calls into question three white institutions in one brief line—“You who are *educated* by a *Christian government* in the art of war” (emphasis added)—and counters these three institutions of assimilation—white schools, religion, and government—by putting them in grammatical opposition to her people—“the practice of whose profession makes you natural enemies of the savages, so called by you.” Here, language play constitutes resistance. She problematizes “education” for white readers, asserting that their education is in “the art of war.” Further in the passage, she challenges the notion of white Christianity by naming God as her own—“oh, *my* God!” (emphasis added)—and then by showing that after “covenanting with God to make this land the home of the free and the brave,” her white readers, in an un-Godly manner, take over land that is not theirs, leaving a “pathway marked with crimson lines of blood...strewed by the bones of two races.” She continues her attack on their so-called Christianity pointing out that the representative of the white Christians, “[y]our Christian minister,” is not motivated by religious love, but is instead interested first and foremost in putting “money in his pockets”: very un-Christian behavior. Winnemucca challenges the morality of the federal government by chastising white readers: “you, who call yourselves the great civilization” who purport “to make this land the home of the free and the brave” are in actuality part of a government that kills Natives, denies them justice, separates them from their families, and holds them against their will: all actions that are neither brave nor liberating.

In addition, she explicitly separates Piute peoples from whites in at least two places. She writes to her white audience, “[Y]ou rise from your bended knees and seiz[e]

the welcoming hands of those who are owners of this land, which you are not.” This passage contrasts the two groups of peoples. Winnemucca deftly shows whites to be hypocritical by using the phrase “rise from bended knees.” This should be a position for prayer, but, instead of displaying Christian behavior, the white settlers rise from the kneeling, prayer position to “*seiz[e]* the welcoming hand.” Winnemucca’s use of “seize” invokes the unlawful appropriation of land and emphasizes her next phrase “of those who are owners of this land, which you are not.” In one quick sentence, Winnemucca shows whites to be un-Christian, lawless, trespassing savages and Natives, in contrast, to be the rightful, law-abiding, civilized landowners.

In the line “leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood and strewed by the bones of two races, the inheritor and the invader,” Winnemucca embeds visual imagery to rhetorically connect the two races on a human level and separate them on a moral one. The pathway she writes of is the land, and it is lined with red blood and white bones, calling to mind red and white people. However, instead of using this imagery to show that Native people and white people differ, she demonstrates that the “crimson lines of blood” and the “strewed bones” belong to both of the “two races.” She recalls Christian rhetoric: the Bible’s assertion that we are all “of one blood” (Acts 17:26). The bones and blood of Natives cannot be differentiated from the bones and blood of whites because both races are human. Nevertheless, the moral attributes of the human beings who once animated those bones and that blood are different: one is the inheritor of the land and the other is the invader. By separating herself and her people from the white, educated, Christian government that she describes, she resists being swept up into what



she shows to be a corrupt, white society and lays rightful claim to the land whites are taking from Native Americans.

In this passage, Winnemucca again enacts the role of Vizenor's "postindian warrior" (11) by writing a "literature of survivance" (63). Vizenor writes, "The postindian turns in literature, the later indications of new narratives, are an invitation to the closure of dominance in the ruins of representation. The invitation uncovers traces of tribal survivance" (63). Winnemucca's "turns in literature" are her play at the language game, transforming definitions of "savage" and "civilized" for her white audience. By so doing, she closes down the dominance of white representation of Indian peoples as savages. This allows for, in the language of Bhabha, a type of mimicry that is "menace" to the dominant culture, a mirrored image that, instead of reassuring, provides "another knowledge" that purposefully disturbs (39). Her differentiation from and redefinition of whites for her white audience parallels Vizenor's "invitation" that "uncovers" her "traces of tribal survivance" (63). Further, this disturbing image mirrored back at a white audience asks them to question their position on land ownership, specifically, to alter policies that have led to unlawful seizure of land by violent means. She shows them that their own taking of land, motivated by white, Christian greed results in the destruction of Native families and the broken hearts of Native women: "the dusky mourner, whose tears of love are pleading for her husband, or for their children, who are sent away from them." Here, Winnemucca writes explicitly about the deterioration of family caused by the government's forced removal of some bands of Piute peoples from their reservations in southeastern Oregon and Nevada to the Yakima reservation in Washington, leaving

behind other related bands of Piutes struggling to survive. Winnemucca's message to her white audience is to shame them into action, and at the end of her narrative, she and her white editor, Mary Mann, tell them explicitly what they should do.

*"For the cause of my people": Winnemucca's Political Petition*

For five years, Winnemucca and others waged a rhetorical war, lobbying both for the release of the Piutes from the Yakima reservation and for an acceptable homeland on or near their ancestral lands. One of Winnemucca's tactics for restoration of land (survival) and Piute control (resistance) was through her lectures. Brumble writes,

Much of *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* must have had its original in one of her lectures. By the time she came to write it down, she would have delivered her tale, in parts, on many occasions, and she would have had a lively sense of how white audiences responded. (70)

Within the text of *Life Among the Piutes*, Winnemucca refuted those who might accuse her of lecturing only for money, signifying that her goal was not a white notion of commercial entertainment for profit but a Native desire to reestablish community, similar to the reunification she had happily experienced after being buried and then unburied by her mother ("My cousin and I were once more happy in our mothers' and fathers' care, and we were taken to where all the rest were" (12)). When a white man at the office of the Secretary of the Interior asks her "So you think you can make a great deal of money by [lecturing], do you?" she responds, "No, sir; I do not wish to lecture for that" (218). She continues, "I have come to plead for my people, who are dying off with broken

hearts” (218). When he intimates that her people deserve to be punished because they “have killed and scalped many innocent people,” Winnemucca responds, “Not so; my people who are over there at Yakima did not do so any more than you have scalped people” (218). Winnemucca continues to use her transrhetorical ethos to play with her white audience. She anticipates that like the white officer they, too, will be skeptical of her motives. When he accuses her people of killing and scalping, she turns his accusations back on him: “my people who are over there at Yakima did not do so any more than you.” She is equating this white man to the Piute people, and asserts that neither he nor they have been violent. Readers, who are very unlikely to have scalped anyone either, then connect themselves not only with him but with her and her people. She quietly creates the bond: we whites and Piutes are all peaceful people.

In order to garner the support needed to get the Piutes off of the Yakima reservation and back to their homeland to reconnect with the rest of their people, Winnemucca had to change the perceptions of enough individuals within the dominant culture so that they might exert pressure on the federal government. Lecturing brought her message to some people, but a book could potentially affect so many more. To that end, she and Mann devised a vehicle with which sympathetic peoples could make their feelings known; they could read her book and then sign her petition. At the end of the last chapter of *Life Among the Piutes*, Winnemucca writes in a style that is almost conversational with her white audience, as if she actually is lecturing to them. She concludes her portion of the text with, “I visited my people once more at Pyramid Lake Reservation, and they urged me again to come to the East and talk for them, and so I have

come” (246). What follows is a note from Mann introducing a petition that Winnemucca wrote, “which a Massachusetts representative will present [to the next Congress] in the hope that it will help to shape aright the new Indian policy” (247).

Having done all she could to alert her readers to the atrocities enacted upon the Piutes, Winnemucca condenses her passionate plea into a petition, two relatively brief paragraphs written in a highly legal tone. The first paragraph returns to statements of ancestral land-holding; “Whereas, the tribe of Piute Indians that formerly occupied the greater part of Nevada” (247) in the petition clearly echoes “My people were scattered at that time over nearly all the territory now known as Nevada” (5) from the opening paragraph of her narrative. She uses this rhetorical moment to present the “diminished” state of her people, their continued “friendliness to the whites” (despite the atrocities they have suffered), and the unjust land loss they are continuing to suffer even though the Malheur Reservation [had been] “decreed to them by President Grant” (247).

In her second paragraph, beginning “I, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, granddaughter of Captain Truckee,” she uses her rhetorical power to elicit real action from her reading audience. She establishes her own ethos by connecting herself with her grandfather, a Captain “who promised friendship for his tribe to Captain Fremont” and who guided and fought alongside white soldiers in the Mexican-American War (247). She uses her grandfather, rather than her father, because of his positive relationship with white people, but she does not rhetorically allow for him to appear subservient: both he and Fremont are equally “Captain.” To add to the protest for land by her and her grandfather’s people, she points out that they stand “together with the undersigned

friends who sympathize in the cause of my people”; that is, not just Indians but white people, too, want what is just for the Piutes. The line is a precursor for the direct address to readers that Mary Mann will later interject.

Continuing her survivance writing, specifically in terms of land, Winnemucca petition[s] the Honorable Congress of the United States to restore to [the Piutes]

said Malheur Reservation, which is well watered and timbered, and large enough to afford homes and support for them all, where they can enjoy lands in severalty without losing their tribal relations, so essential to their happiness and good character and where their citizenship, implied in this distribution of land, will defend them from the encroachments of white settlers, so detrimental to their interests and their virtues. (247)

Requesting “lands in severalty” kept Winnemucca in line with Dawes, who may have been the “Massachusetts representative” presenting the petition to Congress. However, when Winnemucca continues by stating that land ownership will keep the Piutes together as a tribe, she asserts her resistance to Dawes Act assimilation, resisting Senator Dawes’ attempt to promote individual ownership through allotment. Additionally, she assumes the connection between land ownership and American citizenship, but only as protection against white encroachment, both physical and cultural.

Interspersing the legal sounding petition with sentimental rhetoric, Winnemucca ends the second paragraph with a reminder to her white audience that “families were ruthlessly separated,” much like Narcissa Owen will write in her 1907 memoir, and that their “restoration was pledged to them by the Secretary of the Interior in 1880, but has not been fulfilled” (247). This pathetic appeal is obviously designed to pull at her

readers' heartstrings: the misery and unfair treatment cannot go unchecked. And, so, it segues neatly to Mann's direct address added immediately after the petition.

Winnemucca's earlier line acknowledging other "undersigned friends" who have listed their names to the petition, plants the seed, so to speak, that Mary Mann then grows to fruition with her explicit instructions. Mann writes,

Whoever shall be interested by this little book or by Mrs. Hopkins's living word, will help to the end by copying the petition and getting signatures to it, and sending the lists before the first of December to my care, 54 Bowdoin street, Boston. For the weight of a petition is generally measured by its length. Several hundred names have already been sent in. (247)

Mann, a white woman activist, tells the audience specifically what they can do to make a difference.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Piute struggle to maintain land continues. In the mid-1950s some bands of Piutes were told that they no longer existed in the eyes of the U.S. government under a federal policy called "Termination" (Wilson 358-363). Under this policy, the United States ended recognition and terminated reservation land titles in an effort to assimilate Native peoples into mainstream America. In the 1980s, under the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah Restoration Act, the state and federal government restored tribal status to 501 Piutes and searched for a parcel of land to return to the Piute nation. Although a band of Piute people have continually occupied the Pyramid Lake Reservation, the Malheur Reservation was taken from the Piutes through the implementation of the Dawes Act. In 1928, 10 acres of it that had functioned as the

city dump were restored. In 1935, the tribe bought back another 771 acres (the government eventually paid them back, but the reimbursement amount was minimal), and in 1972, the two parcels were combined to form the Burns Paiute Reservation (“Burns Paiute Tribe”). Today about 100 Piutes live on that reservation.

Winnemucca’s rhetorical efforts have borne fruit. Framing the complex rhetorical strategies I exemplified earlier, Winnemucca’s narrative and petition and Mann’s direct instruction on how to act push this text beyond a simple autobiography. Winnemucca uses her transrhetorical persona to call her audience to action. She asks that they lobby for her peoples’ right to leave the Yakima Reservation and return to the Malheur Reservation, land they should lawfully own and control. The narrative not only offers whites something to read about Indians, it also asks them to *do* something in order to correct an enormous injustice. Winnemucca solicits her white audience to work for the return of the reservation land necessary for Piute survival, but, as much as she appears to conform to their ideas of “friendship” and “good character,” she resists by prioritizing the value of Piute “tribal relations,” Piute “interests” and Piute “virtues.” As the discussion of Gertrude Bonnin in the following chapter elucidates, the rhetoric of Native women did make a difference in U.S. policies for Native Americans. Like Ward, Bonnin at times conforms to and at times resists Euro-American norms. But, as with Sarah Winnemucca, Bonnin’s writings show that Indian women were not completely safe from being slandered for the “crime” of speaking out against injustice. Through the available means of spoken word and literary work, and in varied literary forms—ethnographic discourse, direct address, and political petition—Winnemucca used a transrhetorical ethos to enact

survivance for the communal benefit of her people through the reestablishment of land rights and control of life on that land. Today, for 100 Piute people, her rhetorical goal has been achieved.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Although she was married to Lewis H. Hopkins when she wrote her narrative, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins is most often referred to by scholars by Winnemucca, a practice I follow as well. She used the spelling “Piute” to refer to her people. Although many scholars use the spelling “Paiute,” I defer to Winnemucca and use “Piute.”

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to McClure’s article “Sarah Winnemucca, [Post]Indian Princess and Voice of the Paiutes,” published in 1999 in MELUS. Specifically, I echo his idea that Winnemucca is writing something more than autobiography. We both use the literary theories of Gerald Vizenor, although I focus on Vizenor’s notions of survivance, whereas McClure centers his argument on Vizenor’s theories of identity, specifically “Indian” as “invention” and Vizenor’s “term ‘postindian’ to denote a Native identity which resists representation.” McClure’s focus is identity; mine is audience and message.

<sup>3</sup> It is impossible for us to know how much Mary Mann influenced what Winnemucca wrote or how she arranged her information. Mann’s “Editor’s Preface” states that her contribution “consisted in copying the original manuscript in correct orthography and punctuation, with occasional emendations from the author.” The inclusion of the “emendations” from the author, Winnemucca, implies that Winnemucca had the last word on the production of the manuscript. Mann also writes, “I am confident that no one would desire that her own original words should be altered,” suggesting that Mann made little or no changes in content or form. Still, we can assume that the two

women engaged in discussions about what should go into the book, and that is a conversation which would have been infinitely interesting to eavesdrop upon.

<sup>4</sup> Many critical texts have excellent discussions on identity. Some of the more widely read include: Owens, Louis. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1992; Weaver, Jace. *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997; Vizenor, Gerald. *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*. Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> According to Jace Weaver, this term was originally used to describe the position of the Scots and Welsh in relation to the dominant power of the English. Weaver says that noted anthropologist Bob Thomas (Cherokee) was the first to apply it to North American Native peoples (10).

<sup>6</sup> Significantly, this quotation is from 1870, thirteen years before *Life Among the Piutes* is published. With all that Winnemucca endured, it is possible that she held different ideas in 1883 than she did in 1870.

<sup>7</sup> Beginning in May of 1878, the Bannock nation battled against white settlers and cattlemen who encroached on part of that tribe's reservation. They moved west and were joined by some of the Piutes and members of other Indian nations in Oregon. Many of the Piutes did not fight with the Bannocks, but when the Pan-Indian uprising was subdued, even those Piutes who had not participated were punished. As Winnemucca

describes, the U.S. government force marched many innocent Piutes from their homelands north to an area on the Yakima reservation.

<sup>8</sup> Although David Brumble does not cite Weaver specifically, he does apply to Winnemucca's narrative the idea that there is a lack of "contestations over identity." He writes, "[S]he is again unlike modern, Western autobiographers in that she is unconcerned about self-definition," (63) and "She spent time among whites; she spent time among the Paiutes. In reading her book *we* may see implicit in some of her experiences features of a cultural identity crisis, but she seems herself not to have thought about her life in this way" (65).

<sup>9</sup> Weaver writes, "Persons are defined as Indian based on a variety of often conflicting standards: 1) the tribe's or Native community's judgment, 2) the Amer-European community's judgment, 3) the federal government's (or, in some cases, a state's) judgment, 4) self-identification" (4). He labels categories 2 and 3 "outside view predicates," a term he borrows from Douglas Rabb and Denis McPhearson (5).

<sup>10</sup> The General Allotment Act, called the Dawes Act after its sponsor, Henry L. Dawes, by design broke up communally held tribal lands and portioned them out to individual tribal members. Historian James Wilson writes that "In the first thirteen years of the Dawes Act alone, the government forced through 33,000 allotments and 'released' some 28,500,000 acres of 'surplus' land" (308). D. S. Otis, in his 1934 monograph "History of the Allotment Policy" writes, "A member of the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1891 estimated that the 104,314,349 acres of Indian reservations in

1889 had been reduced by 12,000,000 acres in 1890 and by 8,000,000 acres in the first nine months of 1891” (84-85). Otis’ text provides a well-written, balanced, and fascinating report of the results of allotment, confirming that Native land disappeared rapidly. In the 1924 report *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Ša) and her co-authors quote, “a prominent attorney of Creek County...said to know the game from every angle, [who] claimed, ‘If the machinery of the government had entered into a conspiracy to cheat, rob and defraud its Indians in Oklahoma, it could not have done it in a better way than by the laws it passed’” (9).

CHAPTER IV

DECLAIMING AND DEMARCATING:

GERTRUDE BONNIN'S CAMPAIGN FOR NATIVE LAND

There are some phases of our investigation that can be presented best by a feminine mind, and we leave it to Mrs. Bonnin...~ Charles H. Fabben and Matthew K. Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 1924

In the early twentieth century women wrestled with two ideological identities as the vestiges of True Womanhood gave way to the New Woman. In *Intimate Practices* Anne Ruggles Gere relates that the New Woman's "chief attributes were self-reliance, independence, and a desire to experience the world for herself" as compared with the True Woman's adherence to purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity (141). Gertrude Bonnin, also known as Zitkala-Ša,<sup>1</sup> a mixed-blood Yankton Dakota<sup>2</sup> writer and activist, of the early twentieth century, used both ideological definitions of woman in her campaign for Indian rights related to land, community, and culture. As a founding member of the Society of American Indians (SAI), founder and president of the National Council of American Indians (NCAI), and chair of the Committee on Indian Welfare for the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), she reflected the self-reliance and independence of the New Woman by creating multiple political platforms from which to fight against the outrages affecting Indian peoples. Additionally, she embodied New Womanhood by going out to Oklahoma herself, to experience first-hand and report back

on the dire circumstances there. Bonnin personified the New Woman described by Frances Harper in 1894:

to-day we stand on the threshold of woman's era, and woman's work is grandly constructive....it is the women of a country who help to mold its character, and to influence if not determine its destiny; and in the political future of our nation woman will not have done what she could if she does not endeavor to have our republic stand foremost among the nations of the earth. (qtd. in Gere 134)

Bonnin sought to mold the character of America, but like Harper, who was African-American, as a Yankton Dakota Bonnin did not fit neatly into white, middle-class society. Fortunately, despite facing some negativity because of both her race and gender, Bonnin tapped into her audiences' perception of her as already outside the normative definition of a domestic, True Woman to more easily and acceptably grab hold of the New Woman status and speak and write politically. She had both added difficulties but more importantly added power through employing the transrhetorical agency of an Indian woman.

Bonnin embodied Harper's New Woman, national narrative but also utilized Euro-America's lingering desire for women to remain relegated to the domestic sphere. Gere writes, "[T]he new woman resisted domestic life and motherhood ...thereby threatening social welfare, while the mother embraced home and children to create a new generation of healthy and productive citizens" (143). This ideological opposition between the Euro-American concepts of New Woman and True Woman/mother created the gender tightrope upon which Bonnin had to balance, but she brought the added

benefit of Dakota ideals of gender equality to the balancing act. While the tightrope made the performance difficult, the skill it took to walk it also provided the medium for Bonnin to demonstrate her transrhetorical strength. Tapping into the narrative of True Womanhood, she shows how its ideals of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity are under attack in Indian Territory due to the laws of the very government that promoted those ideals to Native women. Just as Ward, Owen, and Winnemucca did before her, Bonnin draws on indigenous female strength and political relevancy to gain entry into the Euro-American public and political sphere. Once she establishes her agency, she puts to use female narratives of domesticity in order make herself legible and effective to her white male audience.

*Paha Sapa, the Heart of All that Is: Bonnin's Rhetoric of Humanity*

In this chapter I argue that Bonnin, at the foundation of her writing about education, assimilation, and the attempted annihilation of Native culture, retains an acute awareness of land loss, and uses a transrhetorical persona to wage a rhetorical battle on behalf of those Native peoples suffering as a result of unjust land policies. Though at first she chooses genres that seem safely in the realm of the accepted female sphere—children's stories, memoir, poetry—she fills those forms with at times stinging political commentary. Later in her life, when she moves to non-fiction essays, articles, and political reports, she writes in what could be considered a male rhetorical sphere, but she makes herself familiar and accessible by using sentimental tropes and narratives of domesticity. In both eras of her writing, she finds ways to first bring the masculine into

the feminine realm and then bring the feminine into the masculine. Her politics saturate her fiction and poetry, and her poetic voice, especially the use of the sentimental, form and inform her overtly political works.

Interestingly, in her earlier works published at the turn of the century, her characters, including her created self in her semi-autobiographical writings, do not adhere to the True Woman ideal and in fact seem to write against it. In works like “A Warrior’s Daughter” the female lead character is the heroine who saves the man, rather than the submissive, domestic wife waiting for her man to come home. Using a narrative device similar to Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller, Bonnin makes transgressing Euro-American gender spheres acceptable and believable by creating a Yankton Dakota female heroine: already “other” her character can do what no white woman would be allowed. This strong female lead becomes Bonnin herself when she writes her political essays. In her early fiction and semi-autobiographical essays the stories carry political messages; in later political works, quintessentially in *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, the politics are explicit but are delivered via sentimental storytelling. Bonnin writes transrhetorically by using the tropes of sentimentalism and applying the defining characteristics of the True Woman—an ideology still in circulation during Bonnin’s time, especially for Indian women—to fight the political battles over the major cause of Native American identity conflict and assimilation trauma; she shows, using heart-wrenching stories of individuals, the devastating results from unjust U.S. federal land policies.

All of the ills experienced by indigenous North American peoples can, at base, be traced back to their losses of ancestral lands and the crimes committed by non-Natives to



obtain those lands. Any number of quotations could be used to substantiate the connection between Native American peoples and land, but perhaps simply stating the Lakota name for the Black Hills suffices: *Paha Sapa*—the heart of everything that is (Wilson 281). Bonnin's remonstrations against the consequences of land theft illuminate all of her writing but culminate in the direct rhetorical warfare she wages in the pamphlet *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*. This chapter provides background information on Bonnin and then traces the critical reception of her work, specifically in regards to land as central topic and sentimentalism as governing mode. From there, it explores some of Bonnin's earlier texts, concentrating on issues of land loss. Explanations of the Dawes, Curtis, and Burke Acts and the Act of May 27, 1908, showing their effects on Native lives and land holdings follow the discussions of Bonnin's earlier texts. Finally, I analyze Bonnin's use of sentimental rhetoric in *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* as a tool to sway public opinion to protect Native land and thus protect Native peoples.

Interwoven within each of these sections is a discussion of Bonnin's ability to move fluidly between female and male rhetorical situations, transrhetorically negotiating gender and cultural spheres for her purposes. Bonnin's writing reveals the corruption resulting from federal acts, and she attempts to move sympathetic Americans to push their government for federal Indian policy reform. Her weapons for reform were her poems, stories, books, articles and official reports. Sentimentalism, still fashionable in literature about Indians during her time and thought of more as a woman's mode of expression, provided her with an accepted medium to elicit the emotional and physical response required from her audience to bring about change for Native Americans.

*Gertrude Simmons Bonnin / Zitkala-Ša: Writer, Activist, Yankton Dakota Woman*

After what she describes in her semi-autobiographical essay “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” as a relatively traditional Yankton upbringing, Bonnin left her mother and her reservation home in 1884 at age eight to attend a Quaker boarding school for Indians: White’s Manual Labor Institute in Wabash, Indiana (Davidson and Norris xli). In subsequent essays, “School Days of an Indian Girl” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” she criticizes the boarding school system designed explicitly to eradicate indigenous culture, rejecting the sentiments of Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, whose plan was to “kill the Indian and save the man” (Wilson 312). Despite these culturally wrenching experiences, Bonnin excelled as a scholar. She attended Earlham College where she distinguished herself as a writer and orator. After leaving Earlham, she taught briefly at Carlisle, then moved to Boston to study violin at the New England Conservatory of Music. At the Conservatory, Bonnin began to write and publish, first the aforementioned essays, which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900. Other politically savvy and sentimentally moving pieces followed: “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” and “The Trial Path” in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* in 1901; “A Warrior’s Daughter” in *Everybody’s Magazine* and “Why I Am a Pagan” in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902.

In 1901, Bonnin penned a collection of retold Dakota stories for children entitled *Old Indian Legends*, published by Ginn & Co. This collection offers an early example of Bonnin’s transrhetorical ability, as witnessed in this seemingly apolitical children’s

collection. In the preface she writes, “And now I have tried to transplant the native spirit of these tales—root and all—into the English language, since America in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue” (Zitkala-Ša v). I imagine that Bonnin savored that line, one in which she deftly turns the tables on the hierarchy she experienced in boarding school. In her preface, Dakota is *the* language and English speaking Americans are the ones who don’t understand and therefore need *her* translation. Instead of taking for granted the superiority of white language, Bonnin privileges Dakota language and Dakota knowledge, as she graciously translates for uneducated whites. Additionally, Bonnin uses the opportunity to remind readers that their English language is *a second tongue*: Dakota language—and people—were here first. Finally, it is not the people who have “acquired a second tongue”; it is the land itself, “America.” Writing a simple children’s book does not on the surface push against the constructs of proper Euro-American womanhood. However, Bonnin enters into a masculine rhetorical space by infusing her political message into the seemingly non-political book. As in all her writing, land provides the foundation of the message, because, of course, the consequences of what happens to the land are always felt acutely by the people.

Exhibiting what Ruth Spack calls, “the traditional power and prestige of Sioux women,” Bonnin formed her transrhetorical ethos by resisting the expected norms of a middle-class woman and wife foisted on her and other Native American girls at white, Christian-run boarding schools (183). Spack offers interesting insight into Bonnin’s feminism in her 2001: “Dis/engagement: Zitkala-Ša’s Letters to Carlos Montezuma, 1901-1902.” She highlights moments when Bonnin asserts her own needs and refuses to

place herself and her own career goals second to Montezuma, to whom she was engaged. In a letter dated June 1, 1901, Bonnin writes, “I require food for the intellect and spirit quite as much as my meals each day. It pleases me to know you too are made that way” (qtd. in Spack 179). In other words, Bonnin is just like a man in that she, too, requires scholarly sustenance. In the second sentence, Bonnin situates Montezuma as her intellectual equal, meaning, of course that she is his. From the perspective of domestic housekeeping, her word choice “require” becomes interesting: it does not imply that she will be doing the providing of meals, this especially in light of her May 30 letter in which she asserts that she “know[s] so little about keeping a house in running order that the under taking [sic] is perfectly appalling” (qtd. in Spack 181). Spack shows that Bonnin “declares her independence repeatedly by stating that she has no interest in being merely a city doctor’s wife, that she ‘would not like to *have to obey* another’” (181). Bonnin’s realignments of gender expectations in contrast with Montezuma’s, along with their differing opinions on how to help Indian peoples, eventually cause her to break off their engagement. Bonnin’s belief in the political strength of women, herself in particular, is also what she uses to create a transrhetorical persona necessary to negotiate both male and female rhetorical spheres as her fight for indigenous rights crystallizes.

Although she is routinely lauded for her contributions to Native peoples, Bonnin is not without controversy. Among her more respected accomplishments: she served as secretary and treasurer in the Society of American Indians (SAI), the first pan-Indian organization united to bring about change in U.S.-Indian relations; she wrote for and later served as editor of the SAI publication *American Indian Magazine*; she founded and

served as president of the National Council of American Indians (NCAI); and she wrote and spoke prolifically on behalf of numerous Native American causes, including their right to American citizenship, which was granted to all Native peoples by 1924.<sup>3</sup> Despite these achievements, Bonnin's letters and transcripts show her to be aggressive and unyielding. Historian Deborah Welch describes her as "intolerant of opposition and suspicious of everyone's motives but her own" ("Zitkala-Ša" 164). She lobbied long and hard against the legalization of peyote for use in the American Indian Church and won that battle, alienating many along the way. When others in the SAI did not see things her way, she found ways to oust them from leadership positions.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, because of the internal strife within the SAI over the legalization of peyote, among other issues, Bonnin and her husband Raymond left that organization in 1919. Still, through all the controversy and in the midst of chaotic U.S. policy shifts, Bonnin retained her concern for and her belief in the necessity of a Native land base, not just for her Dakota nation, but for all Indians.

In order to facilitate a continued lobbying presence in Washington D.C., Bonnin needed a platform organization. She founded and assumed the presidency of the NCAI in 1926 and retained that position until her death in 1938. In the interim between SAI and NCAI, Bonnin used the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) as her home base. As Welch writes,

The cause of Indian welfare had been taken up by numerous women's groups beginning in the late 1800s<sup>5</sup>....[T]he issue of Indian peoples...provide[d] yet another entre [sic] for women into the political arena in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (178)

Women's clubs were the conduit that allowed white, middle-class women to overlap the private, domestic sphere with the public, political sphere. For Bonnin, an Indian woman appealing to a white audience, the arena of the woman's club provided a space in which she could assert the "traditional power and prestige of a Sioux woman" (Spack 183) within the parameters of the white world—both male and female. In 1921 the GFWC created the Committee on Indian Welfare, which Welch reports was "charged with the investigation of reservation life and lobbying for reform" (179). Bonnin "offered her services to the GFWC as an investigator and speaker" (Welch 179), and because of her abilities and connections, the Indian Rights Association (IRA), a largely non-Native group formed to help Native peoples, appointed her to investigate the wide-ranging graft in Oklahoma. The IRA needed a spokesperson who could be both Indian and white, who could be both political and domestic; Bonnin's transrhetorical ability made her the logical choice. As a result of this investigation, Bonnin produced some of her most moving literary non-fiction, focusing on the results of U.S. government land mismanagement in the pamphlet *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*.

*Critical Stances: Identity, Hybridity, and the Sentimental War for Land*

Historically, scholars have assessed Bonnin through the literary lenses of identity and hybridity. Dexter Fisher, in the forward to the 1985 edition of *American Indian Stories* writes of Bonnin's "conflict between tradition and acculturation" (ix). When she chose (or, rather, was coerced) at age eight to go to White's Manual Technical Institute in

Wabash, Indiana, Bonnin rushed from a solidly Native life headlong into white ways of speaking, dressing, learning, and living. Thus, much of the critical writing about her focuses on her search for and creation of a (hybrid) identity: as Fisher calls it, her “position between two alien worlds” (xii). Accordingly, scholars center on her fiction, semi-autobiographical articles, and letters that protest against the assimilative boarding schools—the mechanism by which alienation and loss of identity occurred—and highlight the negative results of her forced acculturation. Rarely does Bonnin’s rhetorical power gained from time spent behind enemy lines, so to speak, come into play.

In no way am I condoning the trauma experienced by Native American children in boarding schools; however, from her post-boarding school actions Bonnin shows that she wrestled with the potential good that could come out of such an education. Despite her antagonism toward Indian boarding schools, she was their product: she briefly taught at and recruited for these schools and was, for a time, engaged to Carlos Montezuma, who supported them. Eventually, she sent her only son away to boarding school. Ultimately, though, what won out was not one sort of identity over the other. Bonnin learned how to negotiate using a white education to speak with a Native voice, and over time learned to use her female-Native voice imbued with Sioux “power and prestige” to infiltrate the sphere of Euro-American political rhetoric. Once inside the political sphere, she could then use a domestic female voice, legible to her male audience, to argue for the land rights of Indian peoples.

More recent articles, such as Gary Totten's "Zitkala-Ša and the Problem of Regionalism," begin to bring land issues into the discussion but don't view land rights as foundational. He writes,

Zitkala-Ša alludes to the debilitating effects of genocide and allotment on the tribal nation as she details allotment's impact on individual lives in her 1921 story, 'The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman,' and in the autobiographical essays, where we find her and her mother living with the corruption of allotment. (102)

Totten's investigation, a valuable addition, concentrates on Bonnin's place in the regionalist canon and so land as a variable must come into play. However, he and other scholars still only tangentially analyze her persuasive, and literary, political rhetoric as she focuses on land as *the* defining issue for Native peoples. This absence of discussion on Bonnin's transrhetorical concentration on land issues might be because, early on, many scholars asserted that her literary career "ceased in 1919 when she left the editorship of the American Indian Magazine" (Willard 11) or assert that "the decline of her 'literary' career coincided directly with her marriage on May 10, 1902, to Raymond T. Bonnin" (Fisher xiii). Ruth Spack suggests that during Bonnin's engagement to Montezuma in 1901 her "life focus turned from the arts to activism" (174) and asserts that her letters to him "capture the moment when Zitkala-Ša gives up the idea of pursuing a literary career" (172). Scholars appear to have split Bonnin's writing career into two parts, defining her turn toward political activism as an end to her literary writing. Consequently, her later, very effective political writings are eliminated from what is



deemed her “literary career.” Yet, her literary abilities provide just the weapon with which she can wage her political war.

As mentioned, much critical response to Native writings, especially published before the mid-twentieth century, centers on the conflicts felt by Native peoples due to forced assimilation, resulting in an unasked for hybridity. Bonnin expresses that conflict in her autobiographical trilogy, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “School Days of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians.” Some of her more memorable moments include the laments, “I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos” and “I was...neither a wild Indian nor a tame one” (97), with which she shows her readers the pain of being forced to exist in two worlds while feeling, at times, that she was fit for neither. Rarely is more than a cursory sentence or paragraph given to what Bonnin *does* with her hybrid identity. I argue that hybridity is better labeled transrhetorical ability, in this case an ability to seamlessly move from one cultural sphere to another, and this ability then “fits” her—i.e. makes her singularly able—to wage a written campaign for land rights. In many of her writings, either as a central or as a tangential rhetorical goal, Bonnin’s words protest against land loss and its negative effects on indigenous peoples, and assert her own urgency to right this most basic of wrongs. Many critics write about Bonnin, some focusing on sentimentality, some focusing on politics, many tangentially mentioning land issues. Still, no one text unpacks Bonnin’s conscious transrhetorical negotiation of Indian and non-Indian cultural spheres and male and female rhetorical spheres as she uses the tropes of sentimental literature for political and practical change in U.S. federal land policies.

*“A piece of land is my birthright”: Bonnin’s Lifetime Fight for Land Rights*

Before Bonnin’s direct, sentimental appeal in *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, she used the aforementioned collection of children’s stories, semi-autobiography, published letters, poetry, and fiction to fight for Indian land rights. This section specifically discusses the semi-autobiographical essay, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” the published epistle, “Letter to the Chiefs and Head-men of the Tribes,” and the short story “The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman.”

In “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (*Atlantic Monthly*, 1900; *American Indian Stories* 1921), Bonnin writes a scene in which she, as a young child, is enraged to find out that the “paleface” has taken Dakota lands and has caused the deaths of her family members. Bonnin writes that when she offers to help get water, her mother replies, “If the paleface does not take away from us the river we drink” (“Impressions” 69). Bonnin accuses, through the voice of her mother,

The paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away,” and continues, “We were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo....At last when we reached this western country, on the first night your sister died. And soon your uncle died also....Both your sister and uncle might have been happy with us today, had it not been for the heartless paleface. (“Impressions” 69-70)

Extrapolating from the information in the text, this conversation between mother and daughter occurred around 1883. If Bonnin’s mother was then in her late 20s or early 30s, she would have lived through some of the most tumultuous times experienced by the

Sioux, including Red Cloud's successful battle against Captain William J. Fetterman in December of 1866, which led to the Treaty of Fort Laramie; the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, which led to an influx of illegal white miners and settlers onto the Sioux Reservation; the successful 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn in which Indians under the great Sioux leader Crazy Horse defeated Custer's troops; and the unrelenting reprisal inflicted on the Sioux by the U.S. Army bent on putting an end to all resistance to the will of the federal government (Wilson 281-282). Historian James Wilson describes U.S. retaliation: "One by one, fighting to the last, the half-starving Sioux bands were brought in and confined around the agencies that had served their vast reservation" (282). Bonnin was born in 1876, the year of the Battle of Little Bighorn. We might assume that those "half-starving Sioux" "fighting to the last" included her mother, her uncle, and her sister.

White readers of Bonnin's "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" could be relied on to have been aware of the not too distant history of Little Big Horn, although, almost certainly, they would have viewed it from a perspective unsympathetic towards the Sioux. Like Owen before her, Bonnin's statement, "The paleface has stolen our land and driven us hither," re-inscribe the white-authored history, forcing a white audience to see the battle and its aftermath through Indian eyes. Instead of viewing the death, destruction and confinement on scant reservation lands as just retribution against the Sioux after the damage done to Custer's Seventh Cavalry, Bonnin portrays the situation of her people as a domestic bliss distorted and ruined by white greed. The broken treaty, the battle, and the subsequent bloody backlash that ensued constituted not a glorious, vengeful victory over the savages, but instead a loss of land that equated to a loss of domesticity,

happiness, and life. This mix of the domestic disrupted by the political provides another clear example of Bonnin's transrhetorical ethos at work.

Bonnin absorbed the tropes of sentimentalism during her time spent in the boarding school system but also recognized the danger of the romantic notion of "the Vanishing Indian," a sentimentalist trope evident in the writings of the aforementioned white writers, Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller. Therefore, to use sentimentalism for her purposes, she had to divest the genre of its damaging notions of vanishing; Bonnin had to use the framework of white sentimentalism, but fill it with content coherent to and for Native Americans. With those brief comments in "Impressions..." equating loss of normal family life with the loss of the river, she inverts the sentimentalist image of a complete, happy family, replacing what white readers desire to believe about Indians with her own Indian reality. In Bonnin's version, the land is vanishing out from under her and her mother's feet, but Indian people are not vanishing; she and her mother persist. Although family is present in Bonnin's sentimentalist writing, that family does not fit the white sentimental ideal. There is no father, and a potential father figure, her uncle, is dead. Her mother's hard work will not bring a better future for her daughters: one is dead and the source of work and life for the other, the river itself, is in danger of being taken away. One sentence—"If the paleface does not take away from us the river we drink"—serves to both assert an ongoing Indian presence and a decidedly unsentimental and unromantic reality of vanishing *land*. And, again, Bonnin transrhetorically shows the Euro-American political disruption in the Native American domestic sphere.

The audience for Bonnin's semi-autobiographical essays consisted primarily of white readers. However, a more diverse group read her "Letter to the Chiefs and Headmen of the Tribes from Gertrude Bonnin, Secretary of the Society of American Indians" in the winter, 1919 edition of *American Indian Magazine*, and so she constructed a rhetorical persona expressly to fit the needs of her rhetorical situation. The pan-Indian organization SAI published *American Indian Magazine*, and from 1918 to 1920 Bonnin served as the journal's editor. Davidson and Norris write "The magazine was distributed to all full members of the society (its Indian members and leadership) as well as 'associate members' (non-Native friends of the Society), and was available, to some degree, to the public" (163). To this mixed audience, Bonnin writes a letter meant for Indian peoples, but one that clearly shows awareness of the presence of a secondary, white audience. She addresses her letter to "My friends and kinsmen" and opens "this little letter is written to you that each may receive a direct message today" ("Letter" 199). "Kinsmen" refers to her Native audience members, but "friends" could mean Indians, mixed-bloods, or potentially sympathetic white readers; "that each may receive a message today" could, in a subtle way, indicate "each" audience group: in reference to land, Indians who still have land and whites who must become educated allies if those Indians are to keep it.

The first portion of the letter makes a case for learning English, indicating pointedly that "our government"—that is, the U.S. government—"is supporting this new movement to educate all foreigners who are now American citizens, by the study of the English language" ("Letter" 199). Bonnin may be tangentially referring to the fact that

Indians did not all have citizenship at this time. Although in Bonnin's words "our government" created laws—many about land issues—that Indian peoples abided by, Indians did not have citizenship nor the right to vote for the people creating those laws. Righting this wrong was one of Bonnin's dearest goals. In her "direct message," she urges that two issues should receive "special attention" for Native peoples: "English-speaking and retaining ownership of a portion of our Indian lands" ("Letter" 199). The first portion of her letter focuses on speaking English. She writes: "Friends, if the White people have found it worth while to do this, isn't it even more worth our while to renew our efforts to speak English?" ("Letter" 199). Contrasting "White people" with "worth our while" indicates an Indian audience, and she continues with this same audience in mind when she writes, "[W]ill you now encourage other Indians to make the effort to learn this language?" ("Letter" 199). Here, it appears that the Indian population Bonnin writes to is literate in English in that she asks them to "encourage other Indians" to be literate in English as well. However, in the next paragraph she adds, "Very often I have wished that you could write to me in a language we both would understand perfectly. I could then profit by your advice in many things, and you would know you were not forgotten" ("Letter" 199). Her use of second person in this passage complicates our notion of audience. If the "you" she is writing to is unable to write back to her in a language "both would understand"—ostensibly English—then her audience is not entirely Indian peoples fluent in English; it includes Indians (or mixed-bloods or whites) who would be telling this message to those unable to read it themselves.

Knowledge of her mixed audience, specifically white readers, may be the motivation for what appears to be Bonnin's somewhat tentative assertion when she moves on to the second issue of her letter. She writes, "And now, I have a word to say about Indians holding permanently a small portion of their inherited lands. Sometimes I fear they are selling their lands too fast and without consideration for the future children of our race" ("Letter" 199-200). Bonnin uses words that literally minimize the issue: "a word," "a small portion," "sometimes," "a small piece," "a few acres." These words work to calm rather than alarm a white audience. Bonnin doesn't ask her pan-Indian audience to rise up and take it all back or even to keep all that they have; she articulates her "sometimes" fear and puts in "a word" to ask that they all save "a small portion." Thus lulled, the white audience is kept at arm's length while Bonnin reminds her Indian audience that they are not like white people and that their lives and cultures, their resistance to full assimilation, depend on keeping Indian land in the possession of Indians. She writes, "though we may become educated in the White man's way and even acquire money, we cannot really be happy unless we have a small piece of this Out-of-Doors to enjoy as we please" ("Letter" 200). In this instance, Bonnin's transrhetorical work moves between cultured more than gendered spheres. She maintains the distinction between what it means to be white and what it means to be Indian, and she asserts that true happiness for Indian peoples requires *land*—"this Out-of-Doors"—and *autonomy*—"to enjoy *as we please*." Finally, she reminds her Indian audience that land ownership determines their future existence, as well: "For the sake of our children's children we must hold onto a few acres that they may enjoy it as we have" ("Letter" 200). With this

sentimental invocation of children she brings the white audience back on board. It would not have fallen on deaf ears of her white audience, and neither would her subtle reminder to them that the Indian, and granted she played the romantic card on this one, had not vanished and wouldn't, provided that white peoples lobbied for laws that respected Native land ownership.

In a short story entitled "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman," included in *American Indian Stories* (1921), Bonnin uses fiction to illustrate the complicated legal workings and underhanded dealings that white grafters used to steal land from Sioux people in Oklahoma. In the story, a complicated web of deceit concocted by corrupt white lawyers and facilitated by two young, assimilated Sioux "nephews," results in two elders losing large percentages of land and in the unjust incarceration of one of the elders, Chief High Flier. Despite the Chief's emotional and inspiring vision of a benevolent Statue of Liberty leading "a vast multitude of women with uplifted hands" shining a "light of liberty [that] penetrated Indian reservations," in the end Bonnin provides no hope for justice ("Widespread" 153). Through blackmail and the manipulation of county laws by corrupt officials and through lies and deceit perpetrated by the Sioux peoples' own children, whites steal Indian land and no one is held accountable for the crime.

In the opening paragraphs of the short story, Bonnin ties the absence of land to loss of identity and loss of culture. Blue-Star Woman, the title character, is described as a white-haired elder and is compared to a "ground squirrel" (143). Bonnin's specific use of *ground* squirrel subtly creates a bond that connects her protagonist with the land.



Bonnin follows with the information that both Blue-Star Woman and the ground squirrel reside on that particular plot of land “through the easy tolerance of the land owner”; therefore, we know that Blue-Star Woman has no allotment of her own (143). In the second paragraph Blue-Star Woman ponders “[i]n deep abstraction” “‘Who am I?’” which “had become the obsessing riddle of her life” (143). Asked to prove that she is Sioux in order, we find out later, to receive her land allotment, she feels a puzzling disorientation. To counter it she asserts to herself, “I am a being. I am Blue-Star Woman. A piece of land is my birthright” (143). Through this monologue, Bonnini shows her readers that loss of identity results from loss of homeland. In the third and fourth paragraphs, Bonnini equates the absence of land with the disappearance of culture. Blue-Star Woman hesitates to pronounce both her name and the names of her parents. She will not say her own because she was taught that “an Indian should never pronounce his or her name in answer to any inquiry” (143). But, Bonnini writes, “Be that as it may, Blue-Star Woman lived in times when this teaching was disregarded” (143). She is not able to share the names of her parents. They died young, leaving her orphaned, and “It was another one of the old, old teachings of her race that the names of the dead should not be idly spoke”; because of this, their names are long forgotten (143-144). Once again, Bonnini uses a transrhetorical narrative structure in which the political sphere disrupts the domestic one. The traditions of family are disregarded by an unfeeling bureaucracy. Government officials refuse to take into consideration old customs and cultural teachings and so continually denied Blue-Star Woman her “birthright.” Bonnini does not explicitly connect the absence of land with the waning adherence to cultural

norms, but she implies that if officials recognized Sioux traditions, they would understand the dilemma and make adjustments accordingly. Implicitly Bonnin asserts a relationship between loss of land and loss of culture.

The previous three examples provide a small sample of Bonnin's continuous war for land in which she asserts her Native persona to gain entry into the male rhetorical sphere of politics but also conforms to the norms of women's writing by using sentimentality and domesticity as her weapon. Bonnin wrote and published prolifically, so, in addition the three texts discussed, her numerous poems, articles, essays, re-written song lyrics,<sup>6</sup> an opera,<sup>7</sup> and even her forward to a collection of re-told children's stories all serve as mediums for her political protest. These writings provide a more than adequate training ground for her most explicit and vitriolic statement, her non-fiction report published in 1924, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*.

*"Shamelessly and openly robbed": Bonnin's Report on the Effects of Unjust Federal and State Land Policies*

Bonnin had reason to worry about continued land loss. Encroaching Euro-American settlers begin usurping Native lands shortly after disembarking on North American soil. Worse, as numbers of Europeans and then Americans increased and as these settlers felt they required and deserved more territory, land was often taken under the auspices of supposedly humanitarian government policies. In the "Summary" section that begins the 1924 report *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians: an Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes—Legalized Robbery*, the authors state,

because Congress, by the Act of May 27, 1908, took from the Interior Department all jurisdiction over Indian probate matters in Eastern Oklahoma and transferred it to the local county courts, the estates of the members of the Five Civilized Tribes are being, and have been, shamelessly and openly robbed in a scientific and ruthless manner. (Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen 5)

The May 27 Act, however, was simply another, albeit even more insidious, piece of legislation on the continuum of legislation that allowed for, as Bonnin, and non-Native co-authors<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Fabens and Matthew K. Sniffen labeled it, “graft and exploitation—legalized robbery.” Centuries of questionable federal and state policies led to the situation in which legally helpless Native peoples lost land, cultural cohesion, and social and physical common ground. By 1924 when Bonnin teamed with Fabens and Sniffen to write and publish *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, United States policies, specifically the Dawes Act of 1887, the Curtis Act of 1898, the Burke Act of 1906, and the Act of May 27, 1908, had deprived indigenous peoples of millions of acres of homelands. This section will explain each act and how it affected Indian land rights.

In 1924, despite what Herbert Welsh, president of the Indian Rights Association, called “a situation that is almost unbelievable in a civilized country,” the federal government was doing nothing to stop methodical, organized pillaging of Native land holdings and usurpation of property rights (3); in fact, the Acts passed by Congress promoted outright theft. Welsh warned “immediate change...is necessary if the members of the Five Civilized Tribes are to be saved from pauperization and virtual extermination” (3). To that end, the Indian Rights Association,<sup>9</sup> the American Indian Defense Association,<sup>10</sup> and the Welfare Committee of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs<sup>11</sup>

each sent a representative—Sniffen, Fabens, and Bonnin, respectively—to investigate and draw up a report. Some historical background provides information essential for understanding the urgency of reform necessitated by the circumstances within which Native peoples struggled.

The 1887 General Allotment Act, called the Dawes Act after its sponsor Massachusetts Senator Henry Laurens Dawes, by design broke up communally held tribal land and portioned it out to individual tribal members. The act was to be a “mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass” according to Theodore Roosevelt, with the humanitarian goal of assimilating Native Americans by making them individual owners of land and awarding them U.S. citizenship (qtd. in Wilson). What resulted instead was massive land loss. D. S. Otis, in his 1934 monograph *History of the Allotment Policy* writes, “A member of the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1891 estimated that the 104,314,349 acres of Indian reservations in 1889 had been reduced by 12,000,000 acres in 1890 and by 8,000,000 acres in the first nine months of 1891” (84-85). The Act cleared the way for non-Indian settlers, railroad companies, and money-hungry grafters, who seized the opportunity to make big, easy, fast money. The “Five Civilized Tribes” in Oklahoma lobbied, successfully at first, to be exempted from the 1887 Act. Despite their protests, the Curtis Act in 1898 extended this “awarding” of land in severalty to include them—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Chickasaw—living in Oklahoma Indian Territory.

The Burke Act of 1906 added to the corruption by adjusting the parameters of the Dawes and Curtis Acts.<sup>12</sup> Under Dawes and Curtis, lands allotted were held in trust by

the government. Indians had only partial ownership and could not sell or lease lands until twenty-five years after allotment was awarded. With the advent of the Burke Act, Indian lands became “forced fee patents,” meaning they converted from being held in trust by the government to “fee simple,” legal terminology for land fully owned by an individual. “Forced fee simple” meant that the “trust-to-fee conversion” happened “without the request, consent, or knowledge of the landowner” (“Forced Fee Patents”). Also, upon the death of an Indian landholder before the held-in-trust relationship ended, the Act allowed that the allotment was cancelled and reverted back to the government. It was then up to the Secretary of the Interior to seek out rightful heirs and award them either the land or the money made from the sale of that land. Finally, through the Burke Act, Indians who had been awarded a patent-in-fee simple became U.S. citizens. In theory and on paper this seems like a positive step: Indians now had complete control over their own lands, their heirs would get their rightful inheritance, and each had citizenship. However, the result was, as Otis writes, “the process of breaking down the safe guard of inalienability which had been thrown around Indian allotments and which was almost completely dissolved by the Burke Act of 1906” (150-151).

The Act of May 27, 1908 further exacerbated land loss and exploitation of rights by transferring probate matters of the “Five Civilized Tribes” from the Department of the Interior to the Oklahoma local county courts. In each of the Acts that preceded it, and even to a small extent in the May 27 Act, the federal government attempted to uphold the inalienability of some lands: that is, not allow them to be sold; not allow oil, gas, or mineral leases on them; nor allow any “incombrance [sic] by deed, mortgage, contract to

sell, power of attorney, or other instrument or method of incumbering [sic] real estate” (Rarick Sec. 1). However, when county courts took over land regulation, unscrupulous land grabbers exploited loopholes or practiced outright deception, coercion, or murder; widespread corruption occurred. Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen write,

[A]ll efforts by the Department of the Interior to have the County Courts follow rules of procedure that would afford a measure of protection to the Indians have failed. The rules promulgated by the State Supreme Court in 1914 were soon weakened, and then were annulled on July 10, 1923, by action of the Oklahoma State Supreme Court, leaving each County Court a law unto itself. (5)

With restrictive federal controls weakened or in some cases removed, the county courts produced exactly what Bonnin’s report title describes: an orgy of graft and exploitation.

“[A]ll lands, including homesteads, of said allottees enrolled as intermarried whites, as freedmen, and as mixed-blood Indians having less than half Indian blood, including minors” were freed from all restrictions by the Act of May 27, 1908 (Rarick Sec.1). Land owned by these tribal members, that had been inalienable, became vulnerable for sale, lease, and usurpation via power of attorney. For mixed bloods with “more than half and less than three-quarters Indian blood,” all lands except homesteads were free from restrictions, but for full-bloods and for those more than three-quarters Indian blood, including minors, land they owned could not be sold, subjected to alienation, placed under power of attorney, or subjected to any other “incumbrance” until April 26, 1931. This did not, however, protect these lands in perpetuity; the Secretary of the Interior could still remove the inalienability and could grant “right of way” through

these lands for “public purposes” such as the building of railroads. In fact, Section 1 of the Act allows the right of way granted to Enid and Anadarko Railway Company to be “continued in force” (Rarick Sec. 1). Also, the Act did not protect those lands from being leased either by the allottee or by a guardian if the allottee was a minor or was deemed incompetent. In their report, Bonnin, Fabens and Sniffen quote “a prominent attorney of Creek County, ...said to know the game from every angle, [who] claimed, ‘If the machinery of the government had entered into a conspiracy to cheat, rob and defraud its Indians in Oklahoma, it could not have done it in a better way than by the laws it passed’” (9). Unwilling to stand by while land allotments and oil and mineral rights rapidly and often illegally transferred out of the hands of rightful Native owners and into the greedy palms of white opportunists, Bonnin set about using her pen and her political clout to save what she could.

Unwittingly, perhaps, the May 27 Act, Section 9 encouraged murder, especially of young landowners with no heirs, by stating “that the death of any allottee of the Five Civilized Tribes shall operate to remove all restrictions upon the alienation of said allottee’s land” (Rarick Sec. 9). While restrictions remained in the case of conveyance of the property to a full or half-blood heir, “if no such issue survive, then such allottee, if an adult, may dispose of his homestead by will free from all restrictions” (Rarick Sec. 9). As seen in Bonnin’s narratives in *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians*, young women and girls who owned tracts made valuable due to oil, gas, or mineral deposits were made particularly vulnerable to being murdered due to Section 9. Therefore, Bonnin wrote to potentially save lives as well as land.

County court systems, staffed by corrupt judges and attorneys, worked to decimate the rights of Native peoples largely by finding legal loopholes through which non-Native individuals could appropriate Native land. These court systems catered to the whims of profligate and greedy “Indian guardians” assigned to help Native individuals navigate the complexities of land ownership. They became the proverbial wolves in the henhouse, taking what they wanted without much, if any, fear of recrimination. Through manipulation of the system, fabrications, and sometimes outright criminal acts, Indian guardians took over Native land allotments, usurped oil profits found on Native lands, leased allotments to friends at ridiculously low rates, and, along with attorneys, siphoned off monies rightfully belonging to Native landholders by charging exorbitant administrative fees. The May 27 Act states that reports made to the Secretary of the Interior about the dissipation of the estates of minors and court fees necessary to fight instances of negligence by Indian guardians “shall be allowed against the estates of...said minors” and representatives appointed to counsel allottees on the preparation of leases of land must do so without charge, “except the necessary court and recording fees and expenses” (Rarick Sec. 6). Allottees were losing their estates trying to pay the legal costs to retain them. Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen report because “there is no provision limiting the cost of administering an Indian estate in Oklahoma” the average is twenty per cent and “has been as high as 70 per cent” (5) “In other sections of the country...in most cases the cost is not over \$20—which is less than two per cent” (5). For some allottees who managed to retain their land and land-based profits, guardians retained control of the finances and meted out money (sometimes in very small amounts) to their Indian



constituents for living expenses. Often, nearby stores owners participated in the graft, and guardians, with the help of owners, only allowed their charges to buy woefully overpriced products in specific stores.

Because local courts appointed guardians to manage the land holdings of minors and incompetents, perfectly competent Native peoples were declared incompetent and assigned corrupt guardians who took over full rights and responsibilities of allotments. Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen describe a few cases in which attorneys present perfectly normal behavior of individual allottees and argue that behavior to be incompetent. The legal battles merely to have oneself labeled competent cost Native peoples' estates enormous amounts of money. Minors were assigned guardians who stole both wealth and innocence. Guardians used alcohol to manipulate Native landholders into signing away land rights. And, as we see in one example Bonnin describes, guardians and their corporate lackeys kidnapped, raped, and robbed a young female landholder. According to the authors, "the Five Civilized Tribes are being, and have been, shamelessly and openly robbed in a scientific and ruthless manner"; "Indian children have been allowed to die for lack of nourishment because of the heartlessness and indifference of their professional guardians"; and "young Indian girls (mere children in size and mentality) have been robbed of their virtue and their property through kidnapping and a liberal use of liquor" (5-6). Thus, while guardians lived comparatively decadent lives fueled by Indian land money, the rightful landowners, who should have been able to live comfortably, existed in the meanest state of poverty and degradation, if they existed at all. The number of acres lost via these policies is too large to wrap one's mind around

and does little to convey the real losses of culture and community. For that we, and the general public of the 1920s, need the politically charged, sentimental retellings of individual stories—the transrhetorical contributions of Gertrude Bonnin.

Bonnin, volunteering her services through the GFWC, sought to bring the hellish situation in Oklahoma to the attention of people who might move to change it. To battle the insidious corruption she put to use the weapon she had honed over twenty years of political activism: storytelling. In order to be allowed to speak and then in order for her words to be heard, Bonnin had to move fluidly between Indian and white worlds and within the white male and female spheres. Using the power she felt as a Yankton Dakota woman and the authority ascribed to her by her audience and co-writers due to the rhetorical situation, Bonnin created a transrhetorical persona that reflected her self-perception and fulfilled her audiences' expectations. This persona gained her entry into the public, political rhetorical fray. Once in, that is, appointed to do the research and write the report with her two white male co-writers, Bonnin then negotiated the male sphere by assuming in key moments a recognizable and acceptable female rhetoric. The best evidence of this is Fabens' and Sniffen's assertion that some of the report was best written by "a feminine mind": Gertrude Bonnin's. Using rhetorically savvy, pointedly accusatory, sentimental writing, Bonnin struck an emotional chord and provided one of the variables that helped to move a sluggish government towards what it claimed it could and would do: protect the land rights of its Native citizens.<sup>13</sup>

*Sentimentalism for Social Change: Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*

Gertrude Bonnin used, as a means to her ends, the rhetoric of sentimentality, something reform-minded women writers had been using for decades. Born at the end of the era of the “Cult of Domesticity” and at the beginning of the advent of the New Woman, she benefited from the changing concepts of women’s roles. These could have been conveyed to her as she made her way through both Earlham College from 1895-1897 and perhaps even more during the time when she may have rubbed shoulders with progressive thinking northerners in her year at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston in 1899. However, as alluded to near the beginning of this chapter, Spack suggests that Bonnin absorbed ideas of independent, intelligent womanhood from her Dakota upbringing. As is made obvious from her letters to Carlos Montezuma, beginning about 1901, she assumed what we would call today feminist ideas; clearly, she thought none too highly of becoming a conventional, American housewife. She writes in an early letter to Montezuma, to whom she eventually became engaged, “I do not mean to give up my literary work” (qtd. in Spack 180). Ruth Spack notes that in the letters Bonnin “challenges all forms of patriarchy and demands equal standing” and “is furious that marriage as he envisions it may limit her ambition” (181).

I would like to make a connection here between Bonnin’s attitudes towards equality for women and her use of sentimental rhetoric for reform. Bonnin knew how to navigate political labyrinths and knew which rhetorical tools were available and acceptable for women to use in order to champion reform within a male political sphere. By 1924, when she co-wrote *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, although the sentimental

novel had generally fallen out of fashion, the use of the sentimental still held sway, especially when coming from the pen of a woman. Reading audiences then (and now?) believed women to be the authorities on emotion. The text of *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* provides evidence for this belief; Fabens and Sniffen hand over authorship stating, "There are some phases of our investigation that can be presented best by a feminine mind, and we leave it to Mrs. Bonnin to describe the following three cases" (Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen 23).

The very educational system in which Bonnin learned to wield a pen was justified by and imbued with the rhetoric of sentimentalism. Bernardin points out as "the first literary response to the era's Indian education system, Zitkala-Ša's stories selectively use the language of domesticity to scrutinize sentimental ideology's foundational role in compulsory Indian education as well as its related participation in national efforts to 'Americanize' the Indian" ("The Lessons" 213). Furthermore, the Dawes Act and corollaries that aimed to "'Americanize' the Indian" were pushed through Congress because of and in response to sentimental, humanist concerns (at least by the benevolent idealists; land grabbers and grafters had different motivations).<sup>14</sup> Individual land ownership, as set out in those federal Acts, purported to turn Native peoples into Christian, domestic, American, farming families, white picket fences included.

Additionally, Bonnin's audience requires consideration. In the Oklahoma report, she re-educates her sympathetic readers. In essence, she was preaching to the choir—people who presumed themselves to be "friends of the Indian"<sup>15</sup>—but to a choir whose good intentions jeopardized Indian peoples' ability to obtain the anticipated sentimental,

domestic bliss. Those well-meaning folks who had assumed a plot of land “given” equaled instant entry into mainstream, agrarian America had used the rhetoric of sentimentality and of True Womanhood—domesticity, purity, piety, submissiveness—to justify allotment. Bonnin, as she had done in so much of her earlier writing, appropriated that rhetoric and used it to show the actual results of allotment and subsequent acts as they impacted specific Indian peoples, using a language her audience could understand because it was a language that they themselves employed. She wrote in the language of sentimentalism to educate a potentially sympathetic audience, showing them how their good intentions had gone so horribly wrong. And she used sentimentality because it was then considered a woman’s medium. She wrote transrhetorically in a sort of rhetorical bait and switch: here is what is anticipated, the tale of domestic bliss, and here is the reality, a story of unimaginable grief brought about by the political maneuverings of corrupt elected officials.

Although Bonnin’s efforts initially produced little change, I argue that her report, especially the pathetic appeals she crafts in descriptions of individual cases, moved her audience to action. Certainly, at least one Congressman seemed to fear the effect her words could have. After Bonnin’s report was published and a Congressional hearing was convened because of it, Welch writes about “the hostile reaction of the subcommittee’s chairman, Congressman Homer P. Snyder, to the emotional indictments contained in ‘Poor Rich Indians’” (“Zitkala-Ša” 190). She reports, “His opening remarks at the Hearings make his unfriendly stance clear: ‘We do not want hearsay evidence; we do not want long stories or legends about Indian lore or anything of that sort. We want specific

cases and specific testimony’” (qtd. in Welch, “Zitkala-Ša” 190). Ironically, of course, Bonnin’s contributions of “long stories or legends about Indian lore” *are* “specific cases and specific testimony.” Snyder was right to be fearful because despite the whitewash of the Congressional Hearings, Bonnin’s rhetoric produced tangible change. She, however, did not escape unscathed; daring to be a woman who spoke out, Bonnin predictably became the target of much vitriolic rhetoric herself.

Gertrude Bonnin harnesses the full force of sentimental rhetoric in reporting the actual events she witnessed first hand during her investigation of manifest graft of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Creek nations in Oklahoma. As Susan Bernardin states, “Zitkala-Ša ...strategically invited sympathy from non-Indian readers even as [she] indicted those same readers for their complicity in colonization” (“On the Meeting Grounds” 209). The beginning of the report, “The Summary,” is written in legalistic language, so Fabens, an attorney, might be the assumed author of that portion. The next section, “The Remedy,” is a short two paragraphs signed by all three authors, Fabens, Bonnin, and Sniffen. Fourteen pages that follow, called “The Bill of Particulars,” provide the history of allotment and information on how corrupt agents and guardians manipulated the Oklahoma system. No one voice stands out, the two men most likely authored that portion of the report because the following section, under the subheading “Regardless of Sex or Age,” begins with the aforementioned quotation: “There are some phases of our investigation that can be presented best by a feminine mind, and we leave it to Mrs. Bonnin to describe the following three cases” (23). For almost ten pages that follow, Bonnin describes the cases of Millie Neharkey, Ledcie

Stechie, and Martha Axe Roberts, all of whom are robbed of money, dignity, and land rights; the abuse of Stechie leads to her death.

Why do the men hand off this section to “a feminine mind”? The logical answer is sentimentalism, but sentimentalism with a Native American, transrhetorical twist. Sentimentalism and the feminine mind were firmly linked<sup>16</sup> and sentimentalism had long been used to “spell out a message to the reader, a message whose intent is to change the social reality which the narrative purports to represent” (Tompkins 67). In Tompkins’ assessment of fiction, she asserts that “The circumstances within which a reader encounters a literary text” are never “neutral” or “disinterested” and, in fact, “are always...political, since they always involve preferences, interests, tastes, and beliefs that are not universal but part of the particular reader’s situation” (9). Bonnin, having worked for years in the political sphere of Washington as a member of non-governmental Indian help groups, had inside information as to the “preferences, interests, tastes, and beliefs” of her readers. In order to tap into their politics so that she and they could “change the social reality” of widespread graft in Indian country, Bonnin employed the feminine rhetoric of the sentimental novel to deliver her political message, and because of her Indian identity, she assumed a transrhetorical persona to get the job done. Shirley Samuels asserts that those who celebrate sentimental rhetoric “conceive of an audience reciprocally shaped by its ‘sensational designs’....[S]uch an analysis finds that the production of a sentimental consumer means the alteration of political as well as emotional values” (4). Therefore, Bonnin’s use of sentimentalist rhetoric in describing scenes of hardship and desperation experienced by Native women purposefully altered

her readers emotionally, moving them tears and to action. Like Winnemucca before her, Bonnin evoked emotion in a way that altered her readers' politics, prompting them to act.

In order to present Bonnin's finely crafted rhetoric, I will focus on her first and most powerful case discussion, that of Millie Neharkey. In response to hearing of Neharkey's trauma, Bonnin writes

There was nothing I could say. Mutely I put my arms around her, whose great wealth had made her a victim of an unscrupulous, lawless party, and whose little body was mutilated by a drunken fiend who assaulted her night after night. Her terrified screams brought no help then,--but now, as surely as this tale of horror reaches the friends of humanity, swift action must be taken to punish those guilty of such heinous cruelty against helpless little Millie Neharkey, an Indian girl of Oklahoma. (Bonnin 26)

She hoped the emotional rhetoric she used would motivate her readers to pressure the U.S. government to publicly recognize and take political action to correct the pervasive, insidious corruption that worked to eviscerate the Indian peoples of Oklahoma, financially, socially, and emotionally. The passage demonstrates Bonnin's transrhetorical ability in which she uses a maternal, domestic tone to simultaneously protest a horrible male transgression of the female domestic sphere—the rape of a young woman. Employing her strength as a Yankton Dakota woman she deploys the tropes of domesticity to fashion a powerful message for an audience she both knows and creates. Carefully molding her narrative to tap into the emotions of her audience leads her to shape that audience by using the rhetorical technique of “poisoning the well”: that is, by discrediting anyone who refuses to hear her. For example, she writes that hers is “an



appeal...[to] honest and fair-minded Americans of this 20<sup>th</sup> century” (*Okalahoma’s* 26); to remain “honest and fair-minded Americans” then, her readers must, by definition, hear her appeal. Using his and other rhetorical moves, she creates an audience that will more readily recognize, accept the veracity of, and act to change the painful situation in Oklahoma’s Indian Territory.

Millie Neharkey’s case reaches its emotional apex in the passage quoted above. In it, Bonnin mixes a largely emotional plea with a quick but important mention of factual evidence in order to establish and then use her authority to move her audience toward just action. The first three sentences set up her largely pathetic appeal. They underscore an inability to communicate, signifying to her audience that the situation she writes of is so heinous as to be, almost, unspeakable. The conversation between herself and the Indian girl, Millie, is long, but “private.” Millie cannot speak of what has happened to her to the larger audience, either because it is too difficult or because she, being a young Indian girl, has no platform from which to speak. Women ideologically are still outside of the public and political sphere, and Millie is removed two-fold: she is young and she is a woman. Unlike Bonnin, who was raised traditionally by a strong Dakota woman, Millie, as we see her described by Bonnin, does not have the tribal connections that perpetuate the notion of Native female public and political strength. For Millie, being outside of the ideological female sphere, as described by white society, does not afford her the increased transgressive ability as it does Bonnin. Bonnin must speak for her. Additionally, the rape and mutilation of Millie by “unscrupulous, lawless...drunken fiends” circumvents any possibility for the virtues of the sentimental,

domestic novel. Millie cannot act the part of the domestic heroine; she cannot play the part of resisting overly forward suitors as she develops into a pure and pious adult because the rape occurs before she is allowed to develop into womanhood. She cannot perform her domestic, womanly duties to “reform the bad or ‘wild’ male” (D. Campbell); because of her status as vulnerable *Indian* woman, she is completely victimized. Worse, she suffers silently without anyone to help her; that is, until Bonnin makes her tragedy public.

Upon hearing Millie, Bonnin says, “*I* grew dumb,” “there was nothing *I* could say,” and “Mutely *I* put my arms around her” (26 emphasis added). The enormity of the crime makes Bonnin, in that moment, mute as well. However, in the lines that follow Bonnin’s re-enters into vital communication on behalf of Millie and many voiceless others. Her report highlights for her readers the results of white greed for land. Weaving pathos into the report ensures that it will be not simply heard, but felt by readers, thereby increasing the likelihood that they may act, pressuring the government to reform land policies in Oklahoma. Interspersed with her use of pathos in this passage is Bonnin’s pointed addition of factual evidence, a transrhetorical weaving of male and female rhetoric. The information which she presents is not simply anecdotal; it carries the weight of lawful testimony as part of “official record at Union Agency, Muskogee” (“Oklahoma’s” 26). With that phrase, she lends herself greater authority, imbues the anecdote with logical appeal, and strokes the ego of her audience; they warrant the “official record” of Millie Neharkey’s story, not hearsay. Her rhetoric alters the reaction of an audience that might be predisposed to disregard the emotional stories a simple

woman writes. Instead, readers may choose to place greater value on the information, knowing that Bonnini's claims are delivered by an Indian woman and are supported by public record. Playing on stereotypes, we could say that Bonnini's use of emotion is used to sway her female readers and makes her legibly female, and her use of facts and her ethos as a true Indian woman affect her male readers and lend her an authority they believe and appreciate.

After the moment(s) of silence enacted by Bonnini on her readers, she relates the horrible situation in language evoking the sentimental. Millie, an eighteen-year-old, is described previous to this passage as being so small and slight as to look "in every way to be a girl of only thirteen or fourteen years" (26). Presenting her as childlike heightens the sentimental rhetoric that follows. She is a "victim of an unscrupulous, lawless party" and is "mutilated by a drunken fiend" (26). She, a terrified child, "is assaulted night after night" but her screams "brought no help"; no moral, law-abiding, warm-hearted soul helps her. Using the phrase "assaulted" in conjunction with the time setting of "night after night" invokes, without explicitly stating, the crime of rape. The "fiends" Bonnini writes of have not simply stolen money from an Indian woman not crafty enough to see through the graft, they have, in Bonnini's rhetoric, *raped a little girl*. Certainly, this cut to the moral center of all of Bonnini's readers, male and female, Native and non-Native. Had money been the only issue, the narrative would not have held the same emotional power. The story of "heinous cruelty" perpetrated by "lawless," "fiend[ish]" men on a young, childlike, female is a "horror": one that results directly from flawed Indian land

policies. With this passage, Bonnin asks her audience to become aware and primes them to hear and react to her request for action.

Because Bonnin has established silence earlier in the passage, Millie Neharkey's child screams are a strong rhetorical turn; through Bonnin's report, the audience can now hear Millie's desperate pleas for help. Just as Bonnin has wrapped her arms protectively around Millie, so can her audience, now, metaphorically do the same, for her and for other Indian peoples. This requires, however, that they heed Bonnin's call to action; her white women readers must become transrhetorical, too, by using public, political voices to defend domesticity. The first part of the pivotal sentence—"Her terrified screams brought no help *then*"—indicts an audience who has done nothing while a helpless girl was robbed and violated. Characterizing Millie as a child works because an audience moved by sentimentalism "views children as spiritually endowed" (Tompkins 19), thus their sin lies in not protecting her. Yet, the second part of the sentence absolves that same audience, subtly acknowledging, assuming even, that the lack of response must have been because of lack of knowledge. By stating "—but now, as surely as this tale of horror reaches the friends of humanity," Bonnin grammatically assumes that the "tale of horror" had not yet reached those "friends of humanity" (26). Once the story does reach them, via her report, surely her readers will react. In addition, the phrasing "friends of humanity" may be Bonnin purposefully addressing the real organization Friends of the Indian, the group that lobbied to bring about allotment in the first place (Otis 20). Their lack of knowledge "*then*," when they pushed allotment through Congress, led to the

deplorable situation experienced by Indian peoples “now”; Bonnin could be asking unobtrusively for them to right the wrong they had a hand in creating.<sup>17</sup>

Delivering her message, her own “scream for help,” Bonnin asserts to an audience groomed to listen, that “swift action must be taken to punish those guilty” (26).

Rhetorically and realistically, because they have heard the screaming, her readers have no moral grounds to ignore it. She uses the conventional technical device of an open appeal, using diction that plants her point deeply in their hearts. What has happened is a “heinous cruelty” and the victim is a “helpless little...girl” (26). Bonnin writes, “This is an appeal for *action, immediate action*” (26); then she creates and empowers her audience, calling them “the honest and fair minded Americans of this 20<sup>th</sup> century” (26). She continues, “We believe they are in an overwhelming majority over the criminal class, and the power is in their hands to redeem not only the helpless Indians, but a sister state of the Union from the petty thieves that infest her” (26). Coming out of the World War I era, this was language familiar to her readers. She was asking them, as they had been asked before, to band together for the good of the country, or at least for the benefit of their “sister state.” Bonnin repackages readers’ patriotic duty as a call for change in Indian land legislature. Before her two co-authors join her for the conclusion of the report, Bonnin completes her emotional appeal by describing in detail two more cases and then listing nine additional ones, briefly outlining each tragic story. “To cite all the cases investigated,” she writes, “would be monotonous repetition; suffice it to say, their number is legion, and while there may be variation as to harrying details, the general result is the same, so far as it concerns the plundering of the Indians” (Bonnin 36).

Tompkins asserts that the sentimental novelist

writes clear, intelligible prose accessible to everyone (a style suitable for artists in a self-consciously democratic nation); ...tells stories about recognizable people in humble settings and thus...illuminates the spiritual dimensions of ordinary life; [the] works, ...firmly rooted in Christian precept, serve as reliable guides to the truths of the human heart” (18).

In writing a report that will motivate readers to action, Gertrude Bonnin utilizes the techniques of a sentimental novelist but applies them transrhetorically. Her audience is one that potentially will act, if they simply know. Bonnin makes the truth of pervasive exploitation of Indians in Oklahoma known to the larger public by telling their stories clearly and accessibly. Her audience then recognizes the Indian victims as people, humble and ordinary, just like themselves, but horribly and unjustly treated. She then uses that rhetoric, those sentimental tropes, to guide the actions of her audience, insisting that they make a difference.

Tompkins writes that there are two questions one must ask to assess the worth of a sentimental novel: “first, whether it was successful in achieving its aims; and second, whether those aims were good or bad” (38). *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians* resulted in some instances of reform. The Congressional committee “did confirm the presence of ‘unconscionable attorneys and persons who make it a profession to obtain appointments as guardians” (Welch, “Zitkala-Ša” 191). Additionally, newspaper editors across the country saw through the blatant dissimulation and published scathing reviews of the proceedings. Finally, both the Oklahoma Bar Association and the Oklahoma legislature

acted to counter the corruption. The Bar Association “passed a resolution denouncing its colleagues who had acted unscrupulously in Indian wardship cases and volunteered to assist in devising yet another bill calling for investigation” and the “legislature passed the Frye Bill which placed maximum limits on the fees attorneys and guardians could collect from Indian wards” (Welch, “Zitkala-Ša” 190-192). Davidson and Norris attribute the 1928 Meriam Report<sup>18</sup> which “laid the groundwork for fundamental changes in Indian policy” to the work that Bonnin did with Sniffen and Fabens (xxvii). In 1934, Allotment was repealed, too late, of course, for Native nations to retain much of their home and/or reservation lands. Directly and indirectly Bonnin achieved her aims, and those aims were good.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Various sources have relied on the archival research of Dexter Fisher for the information that Gertrude Simmons Bonnini was born Gertrude Simmons on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota to Ellen Simmons (Tate I Yohin Win or Reaches for the Wind), a Yankton Dakota, and a white trapper named Felker who left the family before Bonnini was born. In a letter to Carlos Montezuma, Bonnini says she chose the name Zitkala-Ša, a Lakota word that means Red Bird, in response to an argument with her brother's wife. Her brother's wife accused her of deserting her home in order to get an education and told her she "might give up [her] brother's name 'Simmons' too" (qtd. in Fisher v; Bernardin, "The Lessons" 230). She acquired the name Bonnini when she married Raymond Bonnini in 1902. Much of her literary work is published under the name Zitkala-Ša; however, as author of *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, she uses Gertrude Bonnini. Therefore, that is the name I will use in this essay.

<sup>2</sup> In the preface to *Old Indian Legends*, Bonnini refers to the stories she hears and writes down as told to her by "the old Dakota story-tellers" (5). In "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," she writes that her mother says, "The Bronzed Dakota is the only real man" (69). The Lakotas, Dakotas, and Nakotas are related nations that are all referred to, at times, under the name Sioux. The Yankton Reservation was primarily occupied by the Nakotas, and that is where Bonnini lived with her mother before leaving for boarding school. However, from these and other references Bonnini refers to herself as Dakota.



<sup>3</sup> Although some Native Americans received citizenship earlier, all did not receive U.S. citizenship until the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act. Bonnin and others in the SAI lobbied for Indian citizenship for many years. Many, however, did not receive with their citizenship status the right to vote, as that was state governed. In 1917, two years before her letter, Minnesota denied voting rights to the Red Lake Chippewa Tribe (ACLU). Bonnin lived to see the passage of the 1924 Act; however, by the time all Native Americans gained voting rights in 1948, Bonnin had been dead for ten years. For more on the timeline of voting rights see the ACLU website (<http://www.aclu.org/votingrights/gen/12999res20050304.html>).

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Sue Welch, “Zitkala-Ša: An American Indian Leader, 1876-1938.” diss., U of Wyoming, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> There were women supporting Indian welfare causes even earlier, notably Lydia Sigourney, Lydia Maria Child, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, among others.

<sup>6</sup> In 1917, Bonnin published “The Red Man’s America” in *American Indian Magazine*. In it, she rewrites the words to “America” (also called “My Country Tis of Thee”) reflecting an Indian view on America: “Land where OUR fathers died, / Whose offspring are denied” (lines 4-5).

<sup>7</sup> *The Sun Dance*, an opera Bonnin co-wrote with music teacher William Hanson (who was a white man and a Mormon), tells the story of a young Dakota man in love with a chief’s daughter. He must prove himself at the Sun Dance, a ceremony of spiritual renewal that had been outlawed by the federal government. Bonnin supported the

continuance of the Sun Dance. Her opera was performed in Utah in 1913 and 1914 and, the year that she died, 1938, it won New York Light Opera Guild's "Opera of the Year"; unfortunately, in 1938, credit for writing the opera went to Hanson while Bonnin was listed in playbills merely as a collaborator (Davidson and Norris xxi-xxii).

<sup>8</sup> We can assume non-Native status of the men from Herbert Welsh's description of Bonnin in the "In Explanation" introduction to the report. He describes Sniffen as "our Secretary" and Fabens as "an attorney-at-law"; however, he writes parenthetically that Bonnin is "a college-bred Sioux." Had the two men been Native, he most likely would have described their Native backgrounds as well.

<sup>9</sup> The Indian Rights Association has a troubled history in its dealings with Native peoples. As D.S. Otis details in his text *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Land*, the association had a hand in pushing the Dawes act through Congress in the first place.

<sup>10</sup> The American Indian Defense Association (AIDA) was founded in May 1923 by John Collier as "a new, radically different 'Indian rights' organization pledged to preserving rather than destroying Native American cultures and beliefs" (Wilson 339). Collier and Bonnin, ostensibly, wanted the same thing: land rights and cultural independence and integrity for Native peoples. However, near the end of her life, they clashed in their means of achieving these ends and were never reconciled.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Welch writes that after Bonnin lost her public voice via the SAI, she sought out the General Federation of Women's Clubs, "one of the largest and perhaps

most prestigious women's organizations in the country" ("Gertrude Simmons Bonnin" 47). They established the Indian Welfare Committee in 1921 and Bonnin worked with the GFWC and the Welfare committee often (Welch, "Gertrude Simmons Bonnin" 47).

<sup>12</sup> The Indian Land Tenure Foundation

([www.indianlandtenure.org/ILTFallotment/allotindex/index.htm](http://www.indianlandtenure.org/ILTFallotment/allotindex/index.htm)) provides a clear and thorough chronology of allotment legislation and a helpful glossary of terms. The site also links to complete transcripts of each legislative act.

<sup>13</sup> Davidson and Norris, in the introduction to the 2003 Penguin Classics edition of Bonnin's collected works, argue that *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* "called for immediate government action and redress, and would lead to the formation of the Meriam Commission, a group of government officials brought together to attend to a range of problems on reservations" (xxvii).

<sup>14</sup> There are numerous sources to go to for more information on the precursors to, motivation for, implementation of, and results of the Dawes Act. A particularly balanced and well-written discussion comes from *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Land* written by D.S. Otis and originally published in 1934. I used the 1973 edition, introduced and edited by Francis Paul Prucha. This is by far the best discussion I have read on the Dawes Act era.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson writes that after 1879 three philanthropic organizations campaigning for Native American rights "sprang up," and in 1883 their leaders began meeting annually at Lake Mohonk in New York State to forge a common strategy" (295). This group called

themselves “friends of the Indian” and lobbied for the assimilationist tactics of boarding school and land allotment in an effort to “civilize” the Indian.

<sup>16</sup> Kristin Boudreau writes, in her introduction to *Sympathy in American Literature*, that “the sentimental novel [is one] which we have come to identify as the genre that most appealed to female readers” (4).

<sup>17</sup> D.S. Otis has a very balanced discussion of Friends of the Indians, their goals, and their role in the passage of the Dawes Act.

<sup>18</sup> James Wilson attributes this report, created by Lewis Meriam at the behest of the Secretary of the Interior, to prompting from AIDA founder John Collier (341). Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris, in their introduction to the 2003 reprinting of *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* by Zitkala-Ša, assert that it was Bonnin’s *Oklahoma’s Poor Rich Indians* that “called for immediate government action and redress, and would lead to the formation of the Meriam Commission” (xxvii).

## CONCLUSION:

### QUESTIONING AND CONTINUING TRANSRHETORICAL POWER

Everyone knows what a woman must suffer who undertakes to act against bad men.  
~Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins

I began this project focused simply on the relationship between Native Americans and land. In reading the scholarship on Native American writers, I felt as if no one brought up the elephant sitting in the room, the obvious cause of all the ills experienced by Native Americans at the hands of Euro-Americans: that, of course, being Euro-America's insatiable desire for land. Native American peoples experienced outbreaks of disease, starvation, physical attacks, attacks on culture, forced removal, and destruction of family and loss of language via compulsory boarding school: experiences that today are described as genocide and ethnic cleansing. All of these ills can be traced back to land loss. But "land loss" is a deceptive phrase. We lose our keys, we lose a race, but Native Americans did not "lose" their land. Euro-Americans took land from those people who originally inhabited it, farmed it, hunted on it, and lived not simply on it but with it. Because spirituality and interconnectedness with each other, with ancestors, and with all things animate and inanimate in the natural world were embodied in indigenous peoples' relationship with land, "losing" it meant more to them than simply relocating to new real estate.

Europeans and Euro-Americans intent on getting land deployed coercive rhetoric in two directions: in one they used language to remove Native Americans and in another they used it to convince themselves that that removal was inevitable, which then left them blameless. Some Euro-Americans manipulated indigenous peoples with flimsy treaties, often never intending to honor those agreements. In fact, of the approximately 800 treaties drawn up between the United States and Native nations, Congress ratified only 371 of them, and almost one hundred percent of those treaties were broken (Dyer). Transparent graft and exploitation, however, chafed at those who subscribed to a more pure and utopian national narrative. For those people, Native Americans had to vanish in a natural and normative way so that Euro-America could physically expand with a clean conscience. Unwittingly, writers such as Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller, along with more canonical writers Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, and others, were complicit in creating a story of America in which Native American peoples tragically but romantically disappeared. Except that they did not disappear. And neither did they fulfill those two other stereotypes, silent and stoic. Native Americans, specifically for the purposes of this project Nancy Ward, Narcissa Owen, Sarah Winnemucca, and Gertrude Bonnin, negotiated the complex constructs of Euro-American, gendered rhetoric, added in their own cultural strength, and fought back in the war of words.

For Native peoples, land was and for many still is synonymous with culture, clan, family, and identity. As Leslie Silko, Vine Deloria, Jr., Curley of the Crow nation, and many other Native Americans have said, the land is the people. Each of the women in this study expresses an emotional, metaphorical, or literal connection with land. Nancy

Ward tells her people that selling land is like “destroying your mothers”; Narcissa Owen calls removal from land “inhumanity”; Winnemucca tells a story of survival through burial, a physical and metaphorical becoming one with the land; and Bonnin equates true happiness with land. The land is the people and the people are the land, and so Euro-American land theft has more than merely economic ramifications for indigenous people.

Each of the women discussed in this dissertation and many other Native American writers and orators did exactly the turn I fancifully described in the introduction when I envisioned a Native American woman as audience to Galle’s 1575 etching. Instead of seeing Native Americans as the passive receiver of European civilization, bending to European advanced technology and strength, Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin held a hand up and said stop, put a foot down and said no. To use the title of the collection of contemporary Native American women’s writing edited by Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, the women of this project “reinvented the enemy’s language” and used it to wage a rhetorical war for land. By creating themselves as transrhetorical, Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin appropriated Euro-American rhetoric—both the political rhetoric of the male public sphere and the sentimental rhetoric of the female domestic sphere, bringing into this mix their own Native sense of equality and shared power between the sexes. Native American women were able to use their “other”-ness to make permeable the male sphere and then once in became legible by adopting and adapting recognizable tropes of the female sphere. Their ability to slip on and off the mantle of the virtues of the Republican Mother, True Womanhood, and the New Woman allowed them the ability to become transrhetorical. They could speak the gendered and cultured

rhetoric expected by the particular targeted audience and, by virtue of their learned, tribal specific, gender equality, still transgress those expectations in ways that facilitated their own rhetorical goals. Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin became experts at the gender-culture-rhetoric dance. As America “settled,” the balance tipped from the physical violence of the Indian Wars to the rhetorical violence of treaties and unjust laws as a means to take land. Native women, like Nancy Ward, fought in those physical battles to save their nations. But when they realized that the field of combat had switched from weapons to words, they took up arms by usurping gendered Euro-American rhetorics and refashioning them for their own.

More can and should be said about each of the women discussed here, and scholars need to investigate the rhetoric of more Native women in order that a clearer picture may begin to emerge revealing the ways in which Native women manipulated and negotiated white, gendered rhetoric to meet their own goals. For Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin, each situation is more complicated than can possibly be presented in a dissertation chapter. For example, Nancy Ward faced the changing social definition of a woman’s sphere within the Cherokee nation, due to the influence of white immigrants, and Narcissa Owen lived in a time after Cherokee women’s rights, according to the Cherokee Constitution, ostensibly had largely depreciated. Did they lose power in the face of assimilation, or did the Cherokee nation find ways to hold onto a gender equality still unknown in more “civilized” cultures? Sarah Winnemucca had to fight accusations of immorality by white men who wanted to discredit her. Did the attack gain traction? If it did, was it because she was a woman or because she was an Indian? Did



her white women readers believe in and fear the stereotype of savage sexuality at the same time that they believed in and lauded her feminine strength and the fact that Winnemucca, “only an Indian woman,” went where “officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money”? What was the reaction of the early feminists and women’s clubs of the day to the bold strokes that Winnemucca painted for both Piutes and for women? Finally, Gertrude Bonnin: she fought to get her report about the degradation of Oklahoma’s Indians published and presented to Congress. However, Deborah Welch tells relates that when the Congressional hearings came about, Bonnin did not attend because a warrant was issued for her arrest, “which effectively prevented her from being present in the state while the committee hearings were under way” (49). A commanding woman who elicited powerful responses to her actions, Bonnin used the various women’s clubs and her own Indian organizations to her own Pan-Indian and communal ends. What did the women’s clubs receive in return? How did they feel about Bonnin’s activism, bold leadership, and transrhetorical power in mixed-gender, Indian reform associations? Did any of those white women fight with her, combining forces as Winnemucca and Mary Mann had some forty years earlier? There are many questions still to be asked and answered. A brief discussion of each follows.

Close to the end of Nancy Ward’s life a time came when, some critics argue, Cherokee women lost much of the power they had enjoyed and assumed for all years previous. The Cherokee nation was vast and many factions of it embraced assimilative practices. Some members of the nation also believed that their adherence to Euro-American ways would save them from removal, which had been threatened from at least

the time of President Thomas Jefferson, if not before. Partly because of this desire to become or appear to become more assimilated in the hopes of derailing arguments for removal, the General Council of the Cherokee nation in October of 1826 called for a constitutional convention but provided that only adult, free, *male* Cherokee citizens would be allowed to vote. The Cherokee Constitution adopted in 1827 “excluded women from holding office” and “limited the privileges of citizenship to ‘free male citizens’” (Perdue 145). Theda Perdue aligns the shift “from local councils to national government” with the decline of power for women in the Cherokee nation. “This waning of town councils had enormous significance for women. Town councils had permitted women some indirect participation in national government, since town councils determined representatives to the National Council and served the courts” (145). But as early as 1820 and before, the ways the Cherokee governed themselves began to change and each change pushed women further and further outside of recognized political action.

How then does this affect Nancy Ward and how we read her early speeches from the late 1700s, when women in her nation still held equal political power and her rhetoric was directed toward white men? And how does this rhetorical situation compare with her later speeches in the early 1800s, when women’s rhetorical power was apparently waning and her words were directed toward Cherokee men? Ward’s speeches to white treaty commissioners reflected land issues during and after the revolutionary war. Rosemarie Zagarri argues in *Revolutionary Backlash*, that (white) women had more rhetorical power during the Revolution, but the backlash of that was a subsequent loss of power. How might this trend in white women’s rhetorical authority affect Cherokee women, since it

appears that the same sort of decline of rhetorical power occurred within their nation? Ward most certainly responded to this shifting power dynamic with her continued allusions to motherhood and war: equal power as evinced by the spilling of blood. But how does the constitutional elimination of women from political discussion play out in the lives of Cherokee women that came after her?

Jumping forward approximately 100 years, the supposed decline in female political power does not appear to negatively impact what Narcissa Owen relates in her memoir. She moves unconstrained into rewriting the white male version of history using information derived from Cherokee women. What are the possible cultural reasons for her rhetorical strength? Narcissa Owen's family removed in 1819, before the passing of the Cherokee Constitution that disenfranchised Cherokee women. Many who opted for removal declared that their reason for doing so was to move away from white influence and preserve their own cultural practices. Would this mean, then, that Owen was raised by people who influenced her to maintain the Cherokee gender balance of power? Her situation becomes even more complicated when we consider that her grandfather, John D. Chisholm, who signed the treaty of 1817 and removed to Arkansas, was a white man born in Scotland. Does his marrying into the nation and his abiding by Cherokee norms of matrilocality constitute a conveyance of the values of gender equality through to his progeny? Though Owen's paternal grandmother, Martha Holmes, who was married to John D. Chisholm, was Cherokee and Owen's biological father, Thomas Chisholm, was half Cherokee, her mother was white and her father died when she was just three years old. Owen herself tells us that tradition is passed down through the women, and without

a Cherokee mother it seems that Owen would miss out on the essential cultural education that carried with it the belief in gender equality. Still, Owen relates story after story about her Cherokee history and culture and tells us herself that these “traditions of the dim past” are “taught by the elderly Cherokee women, whose duty it was to instruct the rising generation” (46). From her own voice, we have evidence that Owen knows and works to maintain Cherokee gender roles, but much more investigation needs to be done if we are to determine whether or not that includes traditional ideals of gender equality.

If between the time of Ward and Owen there was a decline in the gender balance of power, between Owen and today’s Cherokee women there has been a resurgence. Contemporary Cherokee continue to recognize and honor the equal political power of women: Joyce Dugan held the office of Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians from 1995-1999 and Wilma Mankiller served as Deputy Chief of the Cherokee (Oklahoma) from 1983-1985 and as Principal Chief from 1985-1995. Perhaps outspoken women such as Ward and Owen, from the eighteenth century through to the twentieth, affirmed female power in balance with that of men, maintaining the vein of authority for women of the latter twentieth and now twenty-first centuries.

A closer inspection of the almost thirty entries in the appendix to Sarah Winnemucca’s *Life Among the Piutes* could provide essential information on the negotiation of both gender and racial spheres in 1880s America. Especially enlightening is how Winnemucca was viewed by white men during that time. That she and her editor Mary Mann felt the need to include the letters and editorial in the appendix in order to substantiate her virtue denotes the repercussions Winnemucca must have experienced in

response to her speaking out. In the midst of the reprinted letters, Winnemucca inserts her own commentary about the reprisal she endured for what she had undertaken:

Everyone knows what a woman must suffer who undertakes to act against bad men. My reputation has been assailed, and it is done so cunningly that I cannot prove it to be unjust. I can only protest that it is unjust, and say that wherever I have been known, I have been believed and trusted. (258)

What did a woman have to suffer in order to speak out? And how did race and gender affect how Winnemucca was heard and judged? I argue that the cultural marker of being Indian afforded women rhetors more freedom and agency, but clearly for some critics of Winnemucca the fact that she was a woman speaking trumped the fact that she was an Indian. And, because of the prevalent stereotype of savage sexuality, in some instances Winnemucca, rather than enjoying a greater degree of rhetorical freedom, suffered a double dismissal.

Most of the letters reprinted at the beginning of the appendix to *Life Among the Piutes* reflect positively on Winnemucca's role working for the Army to help them defeat the "hostile" Bannocks and members of the Piutes; they assert that she has been working constantly for the benefit of her people. After Winnemucca's remarks inserted midway through the compilation of letters, the letters offer more proof as to her honorable character as a woman. The tenor of the letters defending her shows that her detractors must have accused her of sexual promiscuity in an attempt to discredit her. In these letters, though, we can see interesting oppositions on what it means to be a virtuous (Indian) woman.

In a letter from “Thos. M. Gregor, *Cpt. First Cavalry*” dated October 28, 1878, he writes of Winnemucca, “She has been constantly in the field, enduring hardships that strong men succumbed under” (260). The letter presents Winnemucca as both strong and worthy of respect; we are obviously meant to admire her ability to do what even “strong men” cannot endure. Alternately, however, in a reprinted editorial from the *Boston Transcript* from 1883, the writer accuses the “‘Council Fire’, the Washington organ of the Indian Bureau,” of “roundly abus[ing] her, and styl[ing] her the ‘Amazonian champion of the army’” (267). One white male, Captain Gregor, presents her strength in battle as a thing to be admired, while another, the editorialist in Boston shows that same trait to be a thing used to “roundly abuse” her.

While some letters defend her status as a respectable woman— from Edwin C. Mason that he has “never know her to do or say a thing that was not perfectly upright and womanly” and that she “is honest, true, faithful, and worthy of the respect and esteem of all good people” (June 17, 1881) (264); and from M.S. Bonnifield to Winnemucca directly, “I have never heard your veracity or chastity questioned in this community” (June 19, 1883) (266)—others defend her ability to speak within the masculine, political sphere, exclaiming Winnemucca “deserves the attention of our best ears at Washington” (from Roger Sherman Day, December 31, 1879) (262);. The societal and cultural norms Winnemucca navigated could be illuminated by further investigation into the gender expectations by white men of women in general, in conjunction with attitudes circulating about Indian women specifically. When did it benefit her to put on the guise of Piute “princess” and perform *female Indianness*, what did that performance entail (that is, did it

include her being tougher than white and Indian men?), and when did she profit from adhering to white norms of a “perfectly upright and womanly” presentation of self?

Changing savage Indian girls into “perfectly upright” women was a goal of the Indian boarding schools, just coming into their heyday about the time that Winnemucca published her narrative. However egregious the results of those schools, an argument can be made that one of the positive legacies from the boarding school era was a certain (and certainly unintended by school officials) pan-Indian political movement that contributed to the Society of American Indians, the National Council of American Indians and, today, to Native Americans in leadership positions at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These connections across Native nations helped them to combine efforts to work to regain land and treaty rights. Gertrude Bonnin can be named along with Carlos Montezuma, Charles Eastman, and others as originators of the Pan-Indian reformist organizations. However, she had access to a resource that the men did not: women’s clubs. Anne Ruggles Gere, in her book *Intimate Practices*, investigates “how clubwomen enacted cultural work through their literacy practices” (2). Gere focuses on white, Jewish, and some African American women’s clubs but only gives one brief mention of Native American women’s groups who came together for the purpose of “preserving the traditions and customs for a true history of the Indian, who is not a vanishing race but a returning people of America” (Rainey qtd. in Gere 6). The Native American women’s clubs were, for the most part, centered in Oklahoma, the former Indian Territory. Did Gertrude Bonnin work with these groups? Were these Indian women’s groups particularly effective? To whom did they speak? Through what venues?

If Bonnin did participate in specifically Native American women's clubs, that work was not nearly as well documented as her work with the General Federation of Women's Clubs. This may be so because the GFWC was middle-class, Protestant, and white. One can imagine Bonnin seeking out the organizations that could do the most for her and her cause of bettering the lives of Native Americans, and ones that would give her not just membership but leadership positions. She was an officer with the SAI and founded and was president of the NCAI (while her husband held a lesser office), but the GFWC was large and influential, claiming up to 2 million members as late as 1925 (Gere 254). This coincided with the time that Bonnin needed numbers and influence to lend her voice more forceful authority in white society; she published *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* as the Research Agent for the Indian Welfare Committee (a committee she originated) of the GFWC in 1924. Gere, however, also posits that women's clubs began declining in "numerical and institutional force" in the 1920s. What effect did that have on Bonnin? Did the GFWC come to her aid when she was arrested and kept from attending the constitutional hearings that were happening largely because of her investigative work? Or was their institutional force already on the decline, enough so as to render them unable to help her? The relationship between this largely white, middle-class, Protestant institution and the very outspoken and some would say driven Indian activist, Bonnin, deserves much more attention.

What also merit more consideration are the texts written by non-Native women that chronologically precede those penned by Native writers. If Native American women gain entry into the male public sphere at least in part because they are *not* white, middle-



class females, how might that translate when the “Indian Problem” is taken up as topic by those very same white, middle-class females? Heidi Hanrahan has argued that not only did Sarah Winnemucca benefit from the editorial assistance of Mary Mann, Mann benefited from the feminism of Winnemucca. Mann could assert feminist notions of her own through the “character” of Winnemucca. I have argued that Child, Sedgwick, and Fuller have been doing something similar with their earlier texts. Child asserted her feminist leanings through her character Mary Conant who had the audacity to marry the Indian Hobomok. Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie was at times aligned and at times a foil to the Indian woman Magawisca and was definitely placed in narrative opposition to the pure and pious Esther. Fuller discussed ideas of nationalism especially as they applied to American women, and at times used as her medium a discussion of the roles embodied by Mohawk women. More work needs to be done on the relationship between white women seeking agency in the male rhetorical sphere and Indian women who enjoyed as normative the ability to speak publicly and politically within their Native nations and so transrhetorically within Euro-American masculine spaces.

An even more important question to extend this study is whether the Native American women writers were cognizant of the rhetorical freedom afforded to them by a white audience as a result of perceived racial otherness. All of the women discussed here spent ample time in white society, enough to perceive that gender expectations differed from those within their own Native nations. Whether conscious of it or not, Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin capitalized on their transrhetorical power. Using racial perceptions held by their audiences in order to move deftly in and out of gendered and

racial identities, these four women enacted Gerald Vizenor's post-Indian warrior, long before we had his words to name what they did. Using not just the enemy's language, but the enemy's concepts of race, gender, and rhetoric, Ward, Owen, Winnemucca, and Bonnin fought for their land and the rights of their people, positively affecting the present status of both American women and Native Americans then and today.

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## APPENDIX: SOURCES OF NARCISSA OWEN

### Cherokee (and other) Elders

“In this book I give you some stories of my Indian ancestors and their old traditions, which were given to me as a child” (46).

“I write for them [family] some of the stories and traditions of the dim past as taught by the elderly Cherokee women, whose duty it was to instruct the rising generation and keep it informed” (47).

“An important source of information was Kah-ta-yah, a Cherokee, the youngest daughter of Cau-lun-na (The Raven) and his wife, Nancy (who was one-half white). Kah-ta-yah’s first marriage was to Alexander Drumgould, and her second was to John Foreman, a Revolutionary soldier, who was the father of Rev. Stephen Foreman, formerly of Indian Territory. Ruth Drumgould, the eldest daughter of Kah-ta-yah, married George Wilson, and their eldest son, Judge William Wilson, was my stepfather. He took careful notes of the narrations of his grandmother, and of all the stories and traditions as given by her” (47).

“Another source of information was my father’s nurse, “Granny Jenny,” who lived to be one hundred and sixteen years old....Granny Jenny was the nurse of Thomas Chisholm, who was born in 1790. Through Granny Jenny my sister Jane was taught the personal history of three generations of the Cherokee kin of my father, and my sister, who was ten years my senior, made it her duty to instruct me in turn; and I, fearing to trust to my memory, kept written notes of these stories of Cherokee family history” (47).

“Kah-ta-yah said that in ancient times, in the town known as Hiwassee, on the Tennessee River, was the residence of an old chief and a goodly number of his people” (59).

“Old Mrs. Drumgould, who was the youngest daughter of Caulunna, lived to extreme old age, and I am telling what she said about this journey and about who went there with Sir Alexander Cummings. I am quite sure that I am correct in this statement” (65).

“My mother told me that while the folks were making this move to the west...” (71); and here Owen proceeds to retell a story about “mountain men” who heard a steamboat and thought it was a monster.”

## Non-Native Sources

“When I first came to Washington, about sixteen years ago, I began to read the histories in the Congressional Library with a view to proving as clearly as I could the various stories I had heard” (47).

“The women historians mentioned at the beginning of this book, as well as Mr. Joel M. Bryan, formerly of Chouteau Indian, Territory, have helped me to understand the relationship of a large number of people whose stories are told in this record” (51).

“The *Century Magazine* (No. 5, 1883, p. 744) represents Oota-cite as being dressed in English style, with the English coat of arms suspended on his breast. (That was in 1730.) The same volume, page 706, makes another reference to the Cherokees in the usual absurd style of too many American authors, representing Oconostota as appearing in a very savage dress” (53).

“From Ramesy’s History of Tennessee we learn...”; after this opening Owen quotes a long passage about Oconostota’s opposition to a treaty, the history of “nations [that] had melted away before them like balls of snow under the rays of the sun,” and the fact that the treaty was made despite Oconostota’s protestations (67).

“The American historians, in giving an account of Oconostota and his commission, state that Oconostota, who had gone there under a white flag, was kept as a hostage, together with the men who come with him....The world may judge of the treachery, whether it was that of the white man or the red!” (69).

“Mr. Mooney says...” and her Owen quotes a passage about the cruelty toward and devastation of the Cherokee during a 1776 raid by “four expeditions...from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia”; Mooney reports that towns were burned, fields were destroyed, Indian warriors were scalped, women were shot, and prisoners were sold as slaves (70).

“In 1821 a letter of an Osage missionary tells the Osage side of the story about the “Claremore massacre,” that Chief Claremore wanted peace, and the Cherokees rejected every overture and pursued their enemies...and all those overtaken fell a sacrifice to the relentless fury of their foes” (75) This is countered in the very next paragraph with “My mother told me that when the Cherokees lived in Arkansas a large number of the Osages—perhaps a hundred or more—made a horse-stealing raid down among the Cherokees....The war chief of the Cherokee people declared war against the Osages” (75).